



THE  
BRAZEN MASK.

==  
A ROMANCE.

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THE  
**BRAZEN MASK,**

**A Romance.**

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



BY

MRS. CHARLOTTE PUTNEY,

*AUTHOR OF CORA, &c.*

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As by degrees, from long, though gentle rains,  
Great floods arise, and overflow the plains :  
So men from little faults to great proceed,  
Guilt grows on guilt, and crimes do crimes succeed. WANDSFORD.

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THE

## BRAZEN MASK.

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ORLANDO, to whom the hermit was relating his sad tale, entreated him to proceed no further, on perceiving him almost convulsed at the recollection of past events.

“ Let me finish,” said the anchorite; “ for I have little to add; but you will find in the sequel that I am no more exempt from misery than yourself.”

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“ I was so shocked at the cruelty of human malice, exemplified in my enemies against my unoffending father, that I was going to rush into the Spanish

lines single handed, and attempt to carry him off; but Alvaro shewed me the impossibility of success in such an undertaking. I next proposed to surrender myself, provided they would set my father free, and sent to the Spanish general to that effect, when he returned for answer that he had no liberty to treat with me—that it was not in his power to release the duke of Andalusia, even if all Africa would resign in his favour; but he was ordered to subdue me by force of arms, and to convey me and my wife to Madrid.

Frantic at this reply, I was for beginning the attack, when reflection told me not an arrow could be shot from our side, but it might pierce my father.

The Spaniards charged upon us, when many of our blacks fell. Alvaro would not suffer a bowstring to be drawn, lest it should prove fatal to the duke.

The enemy gave us a second volley, and wounded several more of our men.

Our

her own way in so essential a point as deliberately destroying a fellow-creature. Masses were said for her in every church in Spain; but all could not alleviate the sufferings of the wretched queen, who died, calling on the duke.

I plainly saw the avenging hand of the Almighty in the death of the queen, but could not pity her fate, for I looked upon her as the murderer of my father.

Fernandez said he had another piece of information for me, which was, that when the nine persons who made their escape from Africa arrived at court, with the doleful intelligence of their disgraceful defeat, the lady Isidora threw herself into a fit of rage, reproaching them with cowardice, saying, she would not have cared if all the inhabitants of Spain had been cut to pieces, so that the hated Acasto and his wife had been taken.— She turned to one of the two officers (for there were only two who had saved themselves by leaping into a boat with  
seven



seven privates), saying—" Oh, you know not what disappointment is to a jealous mind! I would have given kingdoms for the sight of the woman who could gain Acasto's love, and you had not courage to bring her to me; nor would you let me wreak my revenge on him who always scorned the love of Isidora. Nay, start not; for Acasto I did once love, but my husband have I always despised!"

She stamped with rage, and broke a blood-vessel, which in a few minutes silenced her for ever.

" Thus," continued Fernandez, " vengeance has alighted on all your enemies."

" Not all," said I. " What of the miscreant who conceals himself under the disguise of the brazen mask?"

" We have not heard of him since you left us," replied my friend; " and I advise you to shew yourself to the king, who incessantly wishes for your appearance."

I took

I took his advice, when he presented me to his majesty, who was astonished and overjoyed at seeing me; but, like Fernandez, was some minutes ere he could recollect me.

“ I have lost my Isabella,” said the king, taking my hand; “ and I thank Heaven for your return, as I can now perform her last request. When at the point of death, she made me promise to be to you in the stead of a father, which I will fulfil in every sense of the word; for Isabella convinced me, before she died, that I had been accessory to your misfortunes, by giving way too much to her failings. I cannot restore the dead to you, but the little that is left me to perform towards making atonement for the past, that will I do.”

This good man never had but one fault, which was a total blindness to the errors of his wife. I related to him all that had befallen me since we parted,

telling him I had but one earthly wish, which was the restoration of my child.

His majesty was surprised to hear the Brazen Mask could make his appearance on the coast of Africa, in the midst of the battle.

I ordered Carlo in, who corroborated my statement respecting the African, who saw the Brazen Mask go behind me, stab my wife, and pick up my child.

"I would that man was here," observed the king.

"He lived but an hour after he gave us this information," replied Carlo, "and his statement was the words of a man who knew himself to be dying."

The king promised to do his utmost towards the recovery of my son, who, if he was alive, was, after myself, the undoubted heir to the throne of Spain.

"We must proceed with caution," said his majesty, "for the conduct of this person in the brazen mask is so inexplicable, I shall always fear he will make  
his

his appearance again. I do not advise you to make yourself known—leave the inquiry after your son to me, for I will make every effort that is possible to restore him to you. None but your friend Fernandez and I know of your existence, and we must be careful to conceal it from all the world besides.” •

His majesty was so pleased with the unshaken attachment of Carlo, that he settled a pension on him for life.

I took the king's advice, when he immediately offered large rewards, and a free pardon to those who would restore my child, at the same time publishing the circumstances of his being taken away during the heat of the battle, by a man in a brazen mask; or if the child was dead, the same reward was offered to those who could *prove* his death.

This affair became the talk of the nation, but no child was restored to the chilled heart of its unhappy father; nor did any one come forward to prove his death.

death. While this inquiry was made, I retired, by the advice of Fernandez, to an obscure cottage, assuming every appearance of poverty, to avoid exciting suspicion. The rewards for my son were doubled and trebled, but to no purpose; and after our good king had tried for a whole year without success, I quitted Spain, and returned to Africa, to visit the tomb where my heart had long been buried, with my ever-beloved Kora.

The old African warriors received us with friendship, entreated me to live among them, and led me to the tomb of my friends.—“ This,” said they, “ will plead more strongly than any thing we can urge, for this little building we hold as sacred, because it contains the ashes of our chief.”

I leaned against it, when busy memory brought to my imagination my father, Alvaro, and my Kora. A sudden burst of grief shook my frame, and I felt my woes as keenly as I did the day  
they

they happened. Carlo trembled lest my mind should be again affected, and the sympathizing blacks did their utmost to sooth me. I must say, that if compassion, fidelity, sympathy, honour, friendship, and valour, are to be found combined, these artless, persecuted people, possess them all.

As soon as my feelings would let me, I inquired after the fate of my mother-in-law, Leonetta, and was surprised to find she was still alive, and had retired to this island, which is called the Island of Canary. Hither I steered my course, to see a woman whose life had been irreproachable, whose conduct I so much admired, and found she had entered the only nunnery here, and had taken the veil.

After much entreaty she saw me at the grate, and said—"Acasto, prepare for the life which is to come! I have been a guilty sinner, having rejected heaven for earth, being destined when

young, by my parents, to take the veil, and was sent to this very convent for that purpose; but I fled this sanctuary, and chose earthly happiness. I have had the best of husbands and the best of children; but it was fit they should be taken from me, for I deserved them not—I preferred them to Heaven. Hither I have returned, to make atonement for my aberration, and patiently wait the Almighty fiat, to join the spirits of those I loved on earth, who will welcome me on the shores of bliss.”

She begged me not to attempt to see her again, for it disturbed the calmness of her mind; but did not forget to ask what was become of her Kora's child; and when I told her the uncertainty of its fate, she said—“Perhaps it is more blessed than you and I are—it may be with its angelic mother.”

I bade adieu to this holy woman, admiring her resignation, and strayed to this cave, which I found ready dug;  
probably

probably it had been the abode of robbers, or some one like myself, who had tasted too much of the bitterness of this world, to wish to remain publicly in it. Here I fixed my abode, and have secluded myself ever since, for this spot suited the melancholy turn of my mind. Carlo resides in the neighbouring monastery, and supplies me with necessities, for I am seen only by him. I draw on the king for whatever sums of money I want, through the means of Carlo; his majesty and my friend Fernandez are the only persons in Spain who know of my existence. The king has done his utmost, year after year, to gain some intelligence of my lost child, but all his efforts are unavailing.

Thus, my young friend, I have taken a retrospective view of my misfortunes, to shew you there is no exemption on this side the grave from misery, for if honour could have escaped, my father had not suffered—if friendship, Alvaro



had not fallen—if beauty, virtue, and every thing that was admirable in woman, my Kora had not died.

There is one singular circumstance in my narrative, which is, that I have not yet been able to discover the villain who assumed the character of the Brazen Mask.”

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The hermit ceased, and Orlando took his hand, saying—“ Your troubles have been great, almost too great for human nature to support. Through your history you have frequently made me start at the mention of one person, namely, the Brazen Mask. It was he who gave me those wounds which you have healed! it was he who tore my Adela from me, when, through loss of blood, I had no power to resist him!”

“ Angels defend us!” said the hermit;  
“ does the Brazen Mask yet live?”

“ Too

“ Too surely for my peace he does,” replied Orlando.

“ In the name of Heaven, who are you ?” asked the anchorite.

“ My name is Orlando,” answered the young man. “ Your fate seems interwoven with mine, for the monster in the brazen mask is the enemy of us both.”

“ Where do you come from ?” asked the hermit.

Orlando drew from his bosom a manuscript, which he had written of himself, and those connected with him, during his confinement in the castle of Toledo, which the hermit took, and read as follows :

#### *HISTORY OF ORLANDO.*

“ I was born at Toledo, in Spain, and am the son of don De Torza of the same place. I have known but little comfort since my infancy, for as I was unfortunately no favourite with my father, I

was placed under the care of Mezenza, till I attained my eleventh year. Mezenza was more than a parent to me, for it was not till I was removed from him that I was informed he was not my father.

Never shall I forget the day that separated us, when the carriage of De Torza drove up to the peaceful cot where I had passed the delightful years of childhood; a tall, majestic man entered, and addressing him whom I had always called father—"You know my errand," said he; "where is your charge?"

"Are you come so soon?" asked my foster-father.

"Soon do you call it?" retorted the other; "I am three years beyond my time!"

"I had hoped the dear boy and I should have lived and died together," replied Mezenza; "but since we must part——"

"Pray,

“ Pray, father,” said I, “ who must you part with ? ”

“ With thee, my child,” he answered.

“ For what ? ” I asked ; “ what have I done to deserve it ? ”

“ Nothing,” said he ; “ but I must now tell you a secret I have studied to keep you ignorant of, which is, that I am not your father.”

“ You are, you must, you shall be my father ! ” I passionately exclaimed, “ for I never will acknowledge any other ! Oh, father, do not cast me off ! I will not burden you, for I am strong, and can work hard.”

“ Dear Orlando,” said Mezenza, “ you may continue to love me, but you must look upon this gentleman as your father.”

“ Never ! ” I exclaimed, bursting into tears ; “ I wish I may be dumb if ever I call *him* father ! ”

“ Upon my word, young gentleman, you give me a fine proof of your obedience,”

dience," said De Torza: "but I see I have left you too long with this old do-tard; follow me, and I will teach you your duty."

"Oh, father," I said, clinging to Mezenza, "do not let us part, do not force me to go with that savage-looking man!"

"I shall stand no rebellion," observed De Torza, and taking me by the arm, flung me into the carriage; then turning to Mezenza, who stood wringing his hands, said—"Farewell!"

De Torza entered the vehicle, which drove off with great rapidity, holding me in it by force, for I kicked and stamped with all my might, endeavouring to leap out, and return to Mezenza, who I insisted was my father.

I had a desperate spirit, which had never been roused by the kind-hearted Mezenza, and which the iron-hearted De Torza could not quell. He saw his threats did not intimidate me, and wisely left me to myself. I abused him with  
all

all the bitterness I was capable of, and have since wondered he was not the death of me at that time. My rage having spent itself with my strength, I sank exhausted into sullenness.

"Come," said De Torza, taking my hand, "you will now call me father?"

"No, I will not," was my answer; "I never had but one father, and that is Mezenza."

"What will you call me then?" he asked.

"I will call you robber," I replied.

"Why so?" he demanded; "have I ever robbed you?"

"Yes, you have robbed me of my father," I answered; "and I will never call you any thing but robber as long as I live."

The countenance of De Torza assumed a ghastly hue, which took no effect on me, and we both remained silent.

After many hours hard travelling, we entered a thick wood, whose foliage was  
impervious

impervious to the beams of a setting sun, on the side of which was situate an old castle, that De Torza told me was to be my future residence. The castle gates were thrown open, and the carriage entered an avenue, shaded on each side by odoriferous orange trees. De Torza alighted and bade me follow him, which I obstinately refused to do, when turning to one of the servants, he said—“Take that young mule out of the carriage, and convey him into the house.”

The servant attempted to obey his master, when I gave him a kick in the face, saying—“I would not live in any house where my father might not enter.”

De Torza seized me, dragged me out, holding me in his firm grasp till we entered the castle. He ordered his servants to attend, who immediately made their appearance, forming a numerous train; he commanded them to look on me as their future master, and to treat me in every respect as his son.

“I am

“I am not this man’s son,” said I;  
“but am the child of poor Mezenza.”

The servants stared at each other with mute astonishment, which De Torza perceiving, said—“The boy is in an error; for particular reasons I have had him brought up away from me, and he does not know me for his father, nor have I ever informed you that I had this son, because I am not accountable to menials for any part of my conduct.”

The servants bowed obedience, and withdrew.

De Torza led me to a magnificent apartment, the grandeur of which had no charm for me, and offered refreshments that grief would not suffer me to take; he endeavoured to sooth my distraction, but his eloquence failed, for he was not Mezenza.

I was given into the hands of a servant, who had strict injunctions never to leave me, night or day. I was put to bed, and this was the first sleepless  
night



night I had ever passed. My young heart had hitherto been a stranger to grief, which had now taken full possession of it, and was making havock in my constitution; for I pined after the good Mezenza, as a weaned child does after its natural nourishment.

De Torza entered my chamber early the next morning, and asked Murdico why he suffered his young master to lie so late?

"Because I do not think he is able to rise," said the man; "and with due deference to your superior judgment, I doubt your bringing him here will prove a wrong step."

"Pray who gave you leave to think on matters which do not concern you?" asked De Torza. "I employ you to obey, not to dictate."

This imperious master, frowning, approached my bed. I shrieked at the sight of him. When he had looked at me some time, he ordered the servant

to

to fetch father Paulo, who I found fulfilled the offices of priest and physician. He was a venerable-looking man, of a mild aspect, whose gentleness of manner instantly prepossessed me in his favour. He pronounced me to be very ill, advising De Torza to withdraw, and not to see me for some days, as his presence agitated me so much.

“It is strange,” observed the latter, “that a child cannot bear the sight of his own father; but you shall have your own way, Paulo, for I will commit him to your care.”

De Torza left the room, to my great relief. I amended fast under the skilful attention of the priest, who endeavoured by mild precepts to prepare me for an interview with the lord of the castle, who he assured me was my father.

“I hope he is not,” I observed, “because I hate him.”

De Torza entered at the moment, and asked who I was speaking of?

“Of

“Of you,” I replied; for I had not art enough to disguise my feelings.

He gave me a blow which laid me at his feet, and continued his barbarity till I was bruised from head to foot, notwithstanding the intercession of Paulo, and at last desisted only from exertion, when as soon as I could speak, I said to him—“Now I know you are not my father, for if you was, you could not use me in this manner, for Mezenza never struck me in his life.”

De Torza seized me again, and asked if I would now call him father?

“No, you shall kill me first,” I answered.

Paulo entreated he would leave me to him, saying—“This child’s disposition is too much like your own, don De Torza, to be wrought upon by stripes; for believe me, the human mind is of too noble a structure to bend to that treatment which is disgraceful for man to inflict upon a brute.”

“Hold

“ Hold thy prating tongue,” replied my tyrant ; “ do not attempt to control me in the management of my own child ; for though he will not call me father, I am determined in other respects to exact from him the obedience of a son.”

“ I will forfeit my life if he does not render you all that you wish ere long, if you will act as I direct,” observed the priest.

“ Well then, be it so,” said De Torza, “ I give him up to you ; and since I am to have no power over my own offspring, pray when am I to see him again ?”

“ When two such spirits, equally determined not to give way, are equally determined to submit,” replied Paulo.

De Torza called him an old ass, and flung himself out of the room.

I was happily left to the care of this kind man, who found it more difficult to heal my mind than my body, for I never before had received a blow, and young as I was, meditated revenge ; but  
the

the openness of my disposition led me to tell Paulo of my intention.

He eloquently drew a dark picture of revenge, and pathetically entreated me to banish so dreadful a passion from my breast, asking me if I ever heard of the great pattern of human nature revenging himself on his enemies for the ill treatment they gave him when on earth?

I was open to conviction, acknowledged I was wrong, and promised to give up the idea.

My venerable friend was much pleased to find he had some influence over me, and endeavoured to prove I was equally wrong in not acknowledging De Torza for my father; but in this point he failed, and could only obtain a promise from me not to insult him the next time we met.

Paulo was surprised to find my education far beyond what he expected it; but I told him Mezenza (who I still affirmed was my father) had taught me  
all

all he was capable of himself, and hired a neighbouring priest to give me that instruction he was ignorant of.

Three weeks passed in tranquillity, when Paulo proposed a visit from De Torza. My rebellious spirit began to rise at the thoughts of it, and Paulo assured me he would resign me to my fate, nor ever see me again, unless I would determine to behave with some degree of respect to De Torza.

“ I would do much to please you,” I said, “ and a great deal more to plague him ; yet as I ought to be grateful for your kindness to me, I will for once treat him civilly ; but mind I wont call him father.”

Paulo smiled at my spirit, and sent a message by Murdico (who I liked no better than my father), saying—“ He should be glad if don De Torza would honour him with a visit.”

The lord of the castle shortly after appeared, and taking my hand, said—

“ So

“ So I am at last permitted to visit my son!—Pray, young gentleman, who am I?”

“ The mighty don De Torza, of Toledo,” I answered smiling.

“ You are inclined to be facetious, I find,” he observed; “ I did not ask you my name, but what I am?”

“ The strangest man I ever saw,” was my reply.

“ That is true, I have no doubt,” he observed, “ and you will find me stranger still before you are much older; but evasion will be of no service to you.”—Then starting up, as if a sudden thought had struck him, said—“ Follow me—I will shew you something.”

I looked at Paulo, when De Torza continued—“ Oh! your foolish old friend may accompany you, if it is your wish.”

This relieved me, for I should not have thought myself safe without him. We followed the don along a large corridor, down a flight of stone steps,  
through

through another corridor, at the end of which was a small door, that he unlocked, and when we had passed, he locked again on the inside. We were now at the bottom of a small stone staircase, which we ascended, and stood on a circular landing-place, with doors all round. He opened one, and we entered a spacious apartment, elegantly furnished. I heard the sound of a guitar, which some one was playing in an inner chamber; the door being partly open, De Torza bade me look in, but not to speak. I saw a beautiful woman seated on a sofa, who was producing the silver sounds from the instrument, while the most lovely little creature that ever was formed was dancing before her; it had fascination in each movement, and agility in every limb.

I stood gazing at this unexpected sight, forgetting both Paulo and De Torza, for I had never seen any thing  
half



half so beautiful as this little being, who appeared to be about four years old.

The inimitable dancer ceased, the delighted mother threw away the guitar, caught the infant up in her arms, and kissed it with rapture—oh, how I envied it the fond embrace !

De Torza entered, telling us to follow him : the lady started, saying—“ To what unforeseen circumstance is Elvira indebted for a visit from De Torza ? ”

“ To the introduction of that urchin,” said he, pointing to me, “ into my family.”

He took the child out of her arms, saying to it—“ Who am I ? ”

“ My father,” said the innocent, patting his face.

“ When will you say as much ? ” he asked, turning to me.

“ Now,” I answered, “ if you will let me kiss that sweet creature in your arms.”

He set it down, and we embraced as affectionately

Our troops were enraged almost to madness, because they might not retaliate, but yet obeyed their chief, and remained inactive.

The Spaniards charged upon us a third time, when the sincerest, bravest friend that ever man had, my long-tried Alvaro, fell—he dropped to rise no more—fell for my sake, covered with wounds; and for my sake it was he would not defend himself, lest he should occasion the death of my father.

Muley, who was by the side of his master, as soon as he perceived his life had fled, led on some of his brethren to the Spaniards, commenced a furious attack, dealing slaughter round him; then, when his revenge seemed satiated, he returned to the body of his beloved master, wept over it, and wringing his hands, struck a poniard to his breast, and dying, fell on the corpse of Alvaro.

I ordered some of the blacks to carry the body of my friend into the forest,

but by no means to take it home. The dismay and confusion were so great, they misunderstood me, and conveyed it to his house.

The Africans, on seeing they had lost their beloved chief, became desperate, and rushing on the Spaniards, slew them by hundreds: the two armies came so close, they fought with their sabres, while I stood supplicating Heaven to preserve my father.

A shriek assailed my ears—too well I knew the voice—it was Kora's! On she sped through the battle's heat, with her babe in her arms, calling on the name of Acasto.

I caught her almost breathless, when she exclaimed—"They have slain my brother—spare, oh spare my husband!"

As I held her, a dagger, guided by an unseen hand, was plunged to her heart—to that heart which was the seat of honour, love, and virtue! The babe dropped from her arms, she gave one  
sigh,

sigh, and her pure spirit winged its way to the realms of bliss.

My eyes almost started from their sockets as I gazed upon the breathless form of my loved wife, which I still held in my arms. On which side the fortune of the day rested I knew not—the fate of the battle was immaterial to me, for I had nothing more to lose, as I was confident by that time my father must have fallen.

I stood almost petrified with horror, till I was aroused by a loud cry of victory from the Africans: though the number of the enemy trebled theirs, the blacks were so determined to avenge the death of their chief, that they fought from very madness.

Some person shook me violently by the shoulder to arouse me, attempting to take away the corpse of my Kora.—“That must not be,” I sighed; “I do not part with this loved form while I have life.”

“ My dear master ! ” exclaimed the man.

I started—it was Carlo, in a suit of regimentals of the Spanish uniform. The poor fellow had enlisted into the Spanish service under a feigned name, on finding his old master was ordered to be placed in the fore-front of the battle ; as there were many fresh troops raised to complete the army, which consisted of forty thousand men.

“ My father,” said I—“ have I lost him too ? ”

Carlo shook his head, and I then felt that my cup of misery was full. He told me the blacks had obtained a complete victory over their enemies, by making a circuitous movement, and got between them and the shore, thereby cutting off all means of a retreat, and nine persons only, out of forty thousand, made their escape, which they did by leaping into a boat before the Africans had quite surrounded them. The Spanish

nish general was killed, and all their officers except two, who leaped into the boat with seven privates: but this intelligence availed me nothing, for I had lost my all; on that dread day—in that fatal battle, I was deprived of my faithful friend, my affectionate father, and my angelic wife.

Carlo placed me on an elephant, and led me through the forest, but could not persuade me to relinquish the stiffened corpse of my beloved. He had sought for and found the body of the duke, covered with the arrows of his friends, for the blacks esteemed all those who were friendly to their chief, and knowing the duke had adopted Alvaro, they looked upon him with veneration. On seeing the mansion of Alvaro, where I had enjoyed felicity in the highest perfection, I could not bear to enter, when Leonetta, who had learned the melancholy tale, came out to meet me, and in wild accents bade me give her back her

daughter—bade me restore her son to life.

She took the remains of her beautiful child out of my arms (still lovely in death), had them placed by those of her son, and shut herself up with them for some hours. She then came to me with a calm countenance, and said—"My children have preceded me to heaven—let you and I try to follow them, in God's good time."

Leonetta took my hand, leading me into the apartment where lay the bodies of my father, my friend, and my wife—"Let these spectacles of the brevity of human existence," said she, "teach us to prepare for that life which is eternal."

I could hear no more, but threw myself on the remains of those who had been so dear to me, embracing first one, then the other, and sitting down by the corpse of my Kora, was insensible to every thing but my miseries.

Zamba

Zamba entered, and aroused me by hastily inquiring for my child.

Heavens, what a blow was this! I thought I had no more to suffer. Was my dimpled boy too torn from me? In the depth of affliction Leonetta and I were plunged into, we had not thought of the child. I recollected seeing his mother hold him close to her breast, as she darted through the field of battle, and threw herself into my arms.

“He must then have fallen a victim,” said I, “to the same deadly weapon which drank his mother’s life; and my cherub boy is no more.”

Carlo went to search for the little body, and arrived at the spot just as the Africans were hewing the last remains of the Spanish army into pieces; for they did not suffer one to live whose shadow might darken their land. None of the dead had been removed, and Carlo made known to them the object of his search. The Moors held the Spaniards



in such detestation, that they were determined the soil of Africa should not be contaminated by the dead bodies of their enemies, and resolved to throw them into the sea, which occupied the African tribes many hours. Every body was removed, and cast into the deep, but no child was found.—“If,” said the Africans, “the child of our chief’s sister had been killed, his body must have remained here. We must not search for our little chief as dead, but as alive.”

Carlo returned with this intelligence, but where to search was the question : alas ! I was inadequate to the task. I remained sitting by the corpse of the lovely mother of my lost child, my treacherous senses were deserting me, and I was incapable of exertion.

Carlo did all that man could do, for by going among the African tribes, he found a wounded black, who though he knew himself to be dying, begged to be

be instantly conveyed to the husband of the sister of his beloved chief. My faithful servant lost no time, but helped to carry the African to me, who, as soon as he was laid on a couch, said—"You be Acasto, de great duke's son?"

"I am," was my reply.

"You had de sister of my good chief for your wife?" he asked.

"I had," was my answer.

"You had," continued the Moor, "fine littel child, 'bout so high?"

"My boy—what of him?" I demanded.

"You hear what me say, me tell you," replied the man. "When de arrows did fly dis way and dat way, your pretty wife did run among them, with little child in her arms. Me was fighting close by you, saw you catch her, and try to cover her from de arrows, when great big man from de enemy did come behind you, and stab her to de heart, leaning over your shoulder. De child drop

from his moder's arm, and great big man pick him up. Me did run and fight dis man, for de sake of littel boy ; but he did stab me here, and dere, all over my body, and me could not overcome him, for his face was like de shield of dear chief—it was all over brass.”

„ “ Horror ! ” I exclaimed ; “ has my child fallen into the hands of the Brazen Mask ? ”

Distraction seized me, and my lacerated heart bled afresh. I was so absorbed by my sorrows, I could not resist the interment of those who had been my greatest joy ; and the funerals took place on the following morning.

By Leonetta's desire, the bodies of my dear departed friends were buried in the favourite alcove of my Kora, which was formed into a tomb, the very spot in which I was united to the loved object of my soul. To this day I seem to hear the heart-rending lamentation of the  
Moors

Moors at the interment of their chief. I remained in the tomb, close to the body of my wife, till I was emaciated to a mere skeleton; and at last my friend Carlo tore me thence by force.

A blank took place in my intellects, for I became a wandering maniac for nine years. I roamed through many countries, and Carlo was the constant attendant on my wandering steps. Heat, cold, hunger, thirst, nakedness, poverty, thunder, nor lightning, could drive him from me, for I braved all climates, seasons, and elements. At the expiration of a little more than nine years, I gradually recovered my reason, having a confused idea of past events; but how I had subsisted it was impossible for me to imagine, till Carlo reluctantly told me, that during the life of my father he had saved sufficient to purchase a small vineyard, which he let to an honest man, who regularly remitted him the rent—"And on this pittance," said the faithful

faithful fellow, " I have been enabled to sustain my beloved master and myself for nine years. I wrote my tenant word, that I was servant to a gentleman who constantly travelled, which would account for my desiring him to send the payments to so many different parts of the world. And what I have done more than letting my dear master have the interest of his own money ? for the principal was sunk in the vineyard."

The unexampled kindness and generosity of this attached creature drew tears from my eyes, which were the first I shed since I was in the dungeon of my father, when he was confined in the Inquisition.

I proposed we should go immediately to Barbary, the coast of Africa ; but Carlo would not hear of it.

" The treasure you have deposited there," said he, " in the tomb of your friends, is too great for a mind weakened by suffering as yours is. Let us proceed

ceed to Andalusia incog, and see how affairs are going on there."

I reluctantly consented, for my heart yearned to visit the spot which contained the ashes of the dear objects of my affection. We were at this time in Italy, and immediately proceeded through France to Spain. On arriving in my own country, I asked Carlo what disguise I should assume?

"Not any," said he; "for affliction has so altered you, it will be difficult for either friends or foes to recognise you."

We passed for two Portuguese merchants, who were travelling through Spain to France: but Carlo, when we were in private, never forgot for one moment the deference he had always paid his master.

We arrived at the castle of Andalusia by night, and I stood viewing that edifice where I had experienced the kindest paternal care, till Carlo beckoned me  
to

to follow him. He led me round the rock to the spot which opened into the bastion beneath the castle; but we found the old opening blocked up with sand which the sea had washed there. We immediately set about removing it, with some pieces of a small vessel which had been driven there by the winds, and dashed to pieces against the rock; but it was daylight before we had effected an entrance. A foul, damp air at first nearly prevented our respiration, but a sea breeze, which made its way through the aperture we had dug, relieved us.

The darkness of the bastion did not prevent us finding our way to the opposite end of it, where were the different avenues which led to the narrow flight of stairs that conducted us to the panels which opened by secret springs into several apartments of the castle. We did not venture to open them during the day, lest there should be any  
person

person in the rooms who might discover us, but waited till night came on, when I touched a spring, and the panel opened into the apartment where Alvaro had been almost murdered by the midnight assassin in the brazen mask. Bitter recollection was too poignant for me, and I closed the panel with a sigh.

Carlo observed that the chamber could not have been inhabited since we left it, from the quantity of dust collected on the furniture, none of which had been removed. This surprised us greatly, for we expected to find the castle inhabited by some of my relations.

We ascended another staircase, where I touched a spring that forced down the panel, and gave me a view of an apartment which brought many scenes of past felicity to my remembrance, and shook my resolution to its basis. It was the chamber of my dear, departed father! I hastily drew up the panel, and leaned on Carlo for support, for my  
• pulse



pulse ceased to throb at the sight. On recovering, the good creature entreated me to search no further; but I rallied my feelings, and went on. All the rooms in the castle were in the same dusty state, except three, which we found were inhabited by servants. We did not disturb their slumbers; and though we had a full view of them by the light of the moon, had no recollection of their faces.

The state of the castle served us for conjecture, and we left our retreat, heaping the sand into the hole we had made.

On our return round the rock, we observed a man leave the gate of the outer court belonging to the castle. Carlo soon joined him; and after the customary salutations of the morning, asked him who lived in yonder building?

"I and my two colleagues," answered the man.

"You have plenty of room for a small family,"

family," said Carlo. "Pray is the castle your own property?"

"What is your reason for asking that question?" said the man.

"No other but mere curiosity," replied Carlo; "because it seems so singular that only three people should inhabit so large a building."

"Well," said our new acquaintance, "though I never satisfy curiosity in a woman, I always do in my own sex. You must know, this castle once belonged to a great duke, who was nearly related to the king of Spain, and was slain in battle. The duke was a good man, but he had a son who was a very bad one, and who sold himself to the devil. He had an evil spirit at his command, that used to appear under the figure of a man in a brazen mask, whenever he chose to call it, with whose aid the duke's son worked all sorts of iniquity; but having one time offended this imp, he flew away with him in a blaze

blaze of brimstone fire, and the young man has not been heard of since."

"Holy saint Ursula! is this true?" asked Carlo.

"It is a fact, by saint Augustine!" replied our informant. "The king himself sent me and my two brother-soldiers here to keep possession till the death of the young man could be proved; which never can take place, because Satan flew away with him, soul and body together. But his majesty will not suffer any one to have the property till the matter is cleared up; so we may have plenty of pay and good quarters for a thousand years to come, if we should live so long."

"I think you are pretty sure of not being disturbed, my friend," I observed; "for it is not likely the young man will return to take possession of his inheritance in a hurry."

"Oh, there is no fear of that," he said, rubbing his hands; "therefore, you see, what makes one man's misery  
forms

forms another's felicity ; and that is the case through life."

We bade him adieu, smiling at the strange idea he had formed of me ; and as soon as he was out of sight, retired behind the rock, to consult what course to take. Carlo advised me to proceed immediately to Madrid, for circumstances proved the king was favourable towards me ; and we set forward without delay.

I had no intention of claiming my property, but I had an object in view of far more consequence to my peace ; it was to make inquiry after my child.

We arrived safely in Madrid, and to our great joy found out doctor Fernandez, the friendly physician whose kindness I mentioned before. He had no recollection of me ; for when I announced myself, he looked upon me as an impostor, till by conversation he recollected my voice ; and from mentioning many circumstances, he said—" I now recognise

recognise you for my persecuted friend, Acasto, present duke of Andalusia. I could not have imagined grief would so alter the human countenance as it has done yours."

Fernandez informed me the queen was dead; that she died from the pangs of an accusing conscience, for having been the cause of my much-lamented father's death, in ordering him to be placed in the front of the battle, joined to the mortification of losing such an immense army at that time. Her majesty never knew comfort after—sleep totally forsook her, and when procured by opiates, she would rush off the couch, crying out—"The duke! the duke!" Her terror was so great, she dared not be left alone for one moment, being the constant torment of herself and every body round her. She would frequently reproach the king for want of resolution to contradict her, upbraiding him with his weakness, in suffering her to have  
her

affectionately as if we had been brought up together from our birth. De Torza was whispering to the lady, when I went and took him by the hand, saying—  
“ Now I will own you for my father.”

“ Strange boy !” said he, with the first smile I had ever seen on his countenance, “ that an infant has more influence over than his own father !”

“ Am I not right ?” asked Paulo.

“ Hitherto I must confess you are,” answered De Torza : “ but we have another obstacle to surmount.”

He presented me to the lady, saying—  
—“ Your mother.”

“ Mother !” I exclaimed—“ is this angel lady my mother ?”

“ She is,” he replied ; “ will you acknowledge her as such ?”

“ Willingly,” was my answer ; then kneeling to the lady, I said—“ Mother, will you love Orlando ? will you take to your arms your strange rebellious boy, who has long refused to own his father,

but who will always be guided by his mother?"

"I will," she answered, clasping me to her breast—"my sweet repentant fellow, I will."—She shed the pearly drops of compassion on my face, as she said to De Torza—"Why have you kept your son and me so long separate?"

"And why, father," said I, addressing him, "did you not tell me at first that you had such a charming mother to present me to? Mezenza told me mine died when I was an infant."

"I had my reasons for keeping you away," he said, "and Mezenza had his for telling you what he did."

I was still kneeling, and the little dancer stood close by me, twisting its fingers in my hair, which flowed in natural ringlets about my face. I put my arm round its waist, saying—"Who is this beautiful creature?"

"Your sister," replied De Torza.

"My sister!" I exclaimed, holding her  
still

still closer, " may I be always with her ?"

" Not always," he answered ; " your seeing her will depend on your future conduct ; but if you do not displease me, you shall see her occasionally."

" Am not I right again ?" asked Paulo.

" In every thing respecting this boy you are," replied De Torza ; " and I would have wagered one of my estates to the contrary."

" I give you joy," said Paulo, " of this happy termination."

Elvira exclaimed—" I hope this will teach the proudest Spaniard in the country that reason will bend the human mind, when coercion fails."

" Do you mean to rouse me ?" said De Torza.

" Oh no !" answered the lady ; " sooner would Elvira encounter the tiger robbed of its prey, than meet De Torza in a rage."



“Peacc, daughter!” said Paulo, “and let me see the resignation I have so long admired.”

My father took her hand, and said—“Elvira knows my fiery temper—knows the jealous soul within me, and should make allowances for her too hasty De Torza.”

She burst into tears, and sunk on his shoulder, saying—“This, this one concession obliterates years of harsh treatment.”

“No more,” exclaimed De Torza, “or you will make me act the woman.”

My young heart bled for Elvira, and I said—“Mother, why do you weep? oh, if you love Orlando, do not shed another tear!”

“Come,” interrupted De Torza, “we must leave.”

“Am I to go?” I asked.

“No, no,” answered the child, “stay and play with Adela.”

“Well,” observed De Torza, “as I  
*am*

*am* to submit to my children, be it so; Orlando shall stay and spend the day here."

My mother, my beautiful sister, and I, were delighted. My father bade us adieu, leaving us the happiest trio in Toledo.

My beloved mother had much to communicate, and I had a deal of information to give her. Among other questions, I asked why she had suffered me to be so long away from her?

"Because," she replied, "I knew not that you lived—I knew not of the treasure your father kept from me; and even if I had, the wretched Elvira is a powerless captive."

"Captive!" I exclaimed; "is my mother a prisoner?"

"Hush, my son!" said she; "thy spirit is beyond thy years. I read the secret purpose of thine inward thoughts, but age must ripen thee to manhood ere thou canst set Elvira free."

“And free I will set you, or die,” I replied; “but how must I proceed?”

“You have but one line of conduct to pursue,” said my mother, “which is, to submit to De Torza; let his caprice be what it may, do not contradict him.”

“For my mother’s sake, and for the love of this sweet child, I will not,” I answered.

We spent the time in ecstacy, till Paulo came to fetch me away, when the good man thanked Heaven for our felicity. The separation was painful on all sides; my lovely sister sobbed aloud as I bade her farewell, making me promise to come again soon.

De Torza was waiting for me in the apartment appropriated for my use, and asked if I was any better satisfied with my mother than I was with my father?

“I should have been equally thankful to Heaven for both,” I answered, “had my father at first treated me with  
the

the same affection which I have experienced from my mother; but he must recollect he tore me from a kind-hearted man, who I had always believed to be my parent, and treated me with that degree of violence not likely to give me a high opinion of the gentleness of his nature; therefore if my father has found me rebellious, he will acknowledge I had some cause."

"That is as much as to say," he observed, "that I only am to blame; but answer me one question, Orlando—do you now believe me to be your father?"

"I do," I replied; "my mother assures me that you are, and she, I am confident, would not deceive me."

"Enough," he said, "I am satisfied; and shall henceforth take care you are treated as the heir of De Torza ought to be."

He kept his word, and gave me to the care of the good father Paulo, who was a man of deep learning, unaffected

piety, at the same time free from bigotry.

I retired to rest, but the late pleasing occurrences kept me waking many hours, for the form of the little fascinating dancer floated in my brain, and when sleep weighed my eyelids down, dreams restored it to my fancy. I hailed the morn. with joy, for it was the first time I opened my eyes with pleasure since I came to the castle.

Each day gave me increased reason to admire the irreproachable conduct of my friend Paulo, who though he spent much of his time with me, extended his pastoral care to each menial of the castle; he was the arbitrator of their differences, the consoler of their misfortunes, the physician of their bodies, and the shepherd of their souls: even to the haughty lord of the domain he feared not to speak the truth, but failed to strike conviction to his fiery soul, as well as to the heart of his servant Murdico; yet Paulo slack-  
ened

ened not in his endeavours for their welfare.

My father was much pleased with the rapid progress I made in my education, under the instruction of the good priest, and one day finding him in an unusual good humour, I ventured to ask him to grant me two favours—one was to visit my mother and sister, the other was to see my first friend Mezenza.

“Your first request,” he said, “I cannot deny you; but the second I never will grant. If you value my good opinion, do not mention Mezenza again; for I never will consent to your seeing him; and if I find you have met him clandestinely, that moment shall be your last.”

This threat he uttered with the same dark countenance I had seen him assume before, and I was shocked with the reflection that he was my father; but he had given me permission to see my mo-

ther, which consoled me for every other privation.

She received me with rapture, and my beautiful sister capered round me with joy. I did not fail to tell my mother my father's determination, that I never should see Mezenza again. She had not heard the good man mentioned before, therefore could not account for my father's reasons, but advised me, however painful it might be, to obey De Torza.

I commenced schoolmaster to the little Adela, beginning by teaching her the alphabet; and surely no one ever had such a lovely pupil. When my father came to fetch me away in the evening, I told him of my new employment; he smilingly promised I should give her a lesson every day, to the no small joy of us all; and I perceived if my father loved any thing, it was Adela. Her *naïveté*, her infantine artlessness, joined to an uncommon share of beauty, would some-  
times.

times soften the moroseness of his disposition.

I now began to feel myself happy, for things went on more pleasantly than my first introduction at the castle led me to expect. I had an instructor who gloried in me—a mother who loved me—a sister who delighted in me—and a father, who was proud of me. I visited my mother daily, when our affection seemed to increase at every visit. My father always conducted me to her, and at a certain hour fetched me away.

Elvira lived secluded from all the inmates of the castle, except her own servant, who resided with her in the east wing of the building, appropriated to her own use, for none of the servants saw her, save Murdico, who was the majordomo, and Paulo, who was her confessor. I was not surprised at the seclusion of my mother, as it is no uncommon thing for the jealous husbands of Spain to lock up their wives for life.



My beautiful sister improved with a rapidity scarcely credible, which was no wonder, for she possessed a capacity stronger than is generally found in the weaker sex; and De Torza would exultingly say, that in intellect his children resembled him.

The time I spent in forming the mind of my bewitching sister, and conversing with my beloved mother, was passed in ecstasy, bordering on delirium. Often have I hung in admiration over this rosebud of Venus, this master-piece of nature—the lovely Adela! She had a sprightly disposition, which would sometimes make the austerity of her father relax into a smile; then it was, and then only, that I could say I really loved him.

I shall pass over the first seven years of my residence at the castle, during which time De Torza was particularly attentive to my education, and would frequently sit with his eyes intently  
fixed

fixed on my face, suddenly start up, strike his forehead, and pace the room with the wildest agitation.

He taught me to fence himself, and there were times when his eye caught mine, that he would instantly drop the sword, saying—"Go, Orlando, go! that look of thine is more than I can bear! leave me instantly!"

I always withdrew on these occasions, never venturing to ask him for an explanation. My mother could not throw any light on the subject, but said she attributed his violent temper and strange conduct to a slight derangement, which she thought must at these times seize him.

Among other things, he taught me the use of the stiletto and the dagger, when I was sorry to find him expert at giving instruction how to aim a deadly stab in different situations. I begged to be excused learning these kinds of accomplishments, as he termed them, but  
he

he gave me to understand it was his will I should, and snatching the dagger out of my hand, said—"With this instrument I mean you to achieve a triumph worthy the son of De Torza."

I knew not to what he alluded, but inwardly swore not to stain my hands with blood. I had now attained my eighteenth year, the period that my mother had fixed on for making me acquainted with her history, which she gave me, committed to paper, in the following manner:—

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"Elvira was left an orphan (having lost her mother in her infancy, and her father before she had completed her twelfth year) to the care of don De Torza, of Toledo, her sole guardian. She felt her desolate situation at the death of her father, whom she affectionately loved, and entreated to remain in the castle of her nativity, which was endeared to her  
by

by the fond remembrance of her childish days, and by the reflection that she had traversed each avenue with her lamented father, don Orlando Sardino, who had been the companion of her youth. Her request was ridiculed by De Torza—she was ordered to prepare to leave her home; the castle was let to a yearly tenant, the servants all paid off, and discharged.

Shocked at the revolution in her affairs, she repaired to the tomb of her parents, to take a last look at the spot which contained the ashes of those so dear to her. There she gave full vent to her oppressed heart, and invoked their pure spirits to hover round their ill-fated child, wetting the grave with her tears, and would have remained for hours, had not the impatient De Torza sought her out, and dragged her away.

He hastened his heart-broken ward into his carriage, entered himself, and drove off. Vain were the sobs and lamentation

lamentation of Elvira, for the callous heart of her companion was a stranger to feelings like hers.

They travelled many hours, arriving at last at the castle of De Torza near Toledo, where he bade his trembling charge welcome, being received by Murdico, and a disgusting bold woman, who was introduced to Elvira as her future duenna.

The timid girl shrunk from the freedom of Guzzina, who exclaimed—"Do not be alarmed, child, you and I shall soon be better acquainted; but I see I shall have something to do to rub off the rust of a country education."

Elvira cast a look of distress at her guardian, which too plainly spoke her wish for him not to understand her, and he ordered Guzzina to withdraw.

"Bless me!" observed the duenna, "am I to leave the room so soon, when I have but just entered it? However," turning to her new pupil, "I suppose  
you

you will have no objection to accompany me, donna?"

"Withdraw!" vociferated De Torza.

"Well, well," replied the lady, "I am going as fast as I can; but there is no occasion to be in such a hurry. Some great men think they are privileged to give themselves great airs—but they will find they had better let them alone." She left the room, shutting the door with violence.

Elvira kneeled to her guardian, saying—"Oh, don De Torza, if you have any respect for the memory of my dear departed father, do not place me under the care of that woman! Suffer me to retire to a convent, and take the veil—let your conduct be such that I can place confidence in you, for who else has the wretched Elvira to flee to, save De Torza?"

"Sweet girl," said he, taking her hand, "this is more than I hoped for: rely on me, and you shall not be disappointed;

pointed ; only consent to remain here awhile, to regain your health, and then, ask what you will, I will not deny you."

" Must I then remain with that strange woman ?" asked Elvira.

" Believe me, you will find her less disagreeable on a further acquaintance," he replied ; " something must have happened to ruffle her temper, and you have seen her to disadvantage. I am confident she will take that care of you which no one else would."

Elvira was silenced, but not satisfied ; yet she was better pleased with her guardian, for he appeared in a more amiable light than he had hitherto done, and she endeavoured to compose her fears at his request.

The fact was, De Torza could assume whatever character he pleased, and though of a natural ferocious disposition, persuasive accents would at times fall from his wily tongue ; and as Satan  
tempted

tempted our first mother, so would he try to lead the guileless heart astray.

Elvira was too young to develop the man she looked up to for protection, and retired to rest, with her feelings less poignant than they were on her entrance into the castle. She was attended by Guzzina, who was too much offended to speak, and shortly left her to seek that repose her wearied spirits so much required.

The risen sun had shot his golden beams through the casement of Elvira, ere Somnus had loosened her from his soft embrace, when she descended to the breakfast-room, resembling a young rose, refreshed by the dews of morning.

De Torza was waiting her appearance, received her with a smile, complimented her on her good looks, then led her to the breakfast-table, where was Guzzina, as mistress of the ceremony. She tried to get into the good graces of her new guest, but was not so great an adept  
at



at deception as her master, for her awkward attempts to appear something better than she was made Elvira smile; and as far as this artless girl could see into such a character, so far she saw into Guzzina.

De Torza remained several weeks at the castle, who failed not to exert his utmost powers to please and ingratiate himself with his beautiful charge, for when he talked of leaving, she again entreated permission to retire to a convent.

“That is the only request you can make which I cannot grant,” he said; “but I have been thinking your residence here may be rendered less irksome by having a companion of your own age. Such an one I have sought for and found, who will arrive to-night. She is a friendless girl, from the Foundling in Paris, and is made to understand she is to spend her life with you, provided she can make herself agreeable. I should have gone to Madrid before this,  
but

but have waited to introduce Annette to you, and see how far she will please her mistress."

Elvira felt grateful for this mark of attention in her guardian, being predetermined to be satisfied with her young companion, who arrived late in the evening, conducted by Murdico.

Annette was spiritless and ill from the fatigue of travelling, joined to the heat of the climate, which won upon the susceptible heart of her mistress, who nursed her with the same kindness as though she had been her equal. Gratitude bound the French girl to Elvira, whose forlorn situation, in some points, resembled her own; and a bond of friendship was cemented between them, which no circumstances could break.

De Torza staid a month longer, and was satisfied with his stratagem of reconciling his charge to that confinement which it was his intention she should never quit. He left her, guarded by  
Murdico

Murdico and Guzzina, whose fidelity might be relied on, provided they were engaged in any diabolical business.

The sprightly disposition of Annette saved her mistress from sinking into a state of melancholy ; and as Guzzina troubled herself very little about them, save to lock them up every night, Elvira found the time pass more lightly than she expected ; for as the duenna was addicted to drinking more wine than water, the young friends were generally left to themselves.

Twelve months rolled on, and they were one evening strolling round the grounds, which were enclosed by a high stone wall, when Annette exclaimed—  
“ Oh, mademoiselle, how I should like to see what is on the other side that great ugly wall ! ”

“ So should I,” answered her mistress, “ if it was possible.”

“ Not any thing is impossible to a Frenchwoman,” said the lively girl.

“ When

“ When we have once scaled that odious wall, we will run as far as our legs can carry us, and we shall most probably meet some wandering knight, or great prince, who will, beyond all doubt, fall desperately in love with you, because you are so very handsome, and his esquire will take a fancy to me, when we shall have two lovers, dying and sighing, to bear us far away from this haunted castle. Oh, *charmante, charmante!*”

“ It would be charming indeed,” Elvira observed, “ if things were to be as you say.”

“ Leave all to me,” answered her maid, “ for I am determined to have a peep over that wall, if I break my little neck.”

They retired to rest, full of their new project, and Annette, who slept in her mistress’s chamber, started up in the middle of the night, saying—“ I have it, mademoiselle! I have contrived it all!”

She was for rising immediately, till  
Elvira

Elvira reminded her she was not quite slim enough to slip through the key-hole.

“ Ah, never fret,” replied the undaunted *femme-de-chambre*; “ our old gaoler, Guzzina, will liberate us in the morning, and then we will go to work.”

The duenna, who wore a large bunch of keys by her side, at the usual hour unlocked the door of their apartment, and Annette led her mistress round to a sequestered part of the grounds, where were the ruins of a decayed alcove, saying—“ See, mademoiselle, look at these precious old stones.”

“ I see no beauty in them,” replied Elvira; “ pray in what does their value lie?”

“ In the power to set us free,” answered the maid.

“ Impossible !” exclaimed her mistress. “ Do you think it practicable to batter down this thick wall with them ?”

“ Oh no,” said Annette; “ a French-  
woman

woman has more ingenuity than to adopt such a plan, and you are jesting with me when you say so ; but I have more treasures, which you have not yet seen." She began to remove some of the stones, and exultingly displayed a quantity of thick ropes, which were buried beneath the ruins.

" And what do you mean to do with these, Annette?" asked her mistress.

" You shall see," she answered.

Annette tied a rope round a moderate sized stone, for many of them were too heavy for her to lift ; she climbed the highest part of the ruins, and, after many attempts, succeeded in throwing it over the wall, holding the other end of the rope, which she fastened to the remaining part of the alcove.

" I perceive your intention," said Elvira ; " but that stone you have thrown over is not sufficiently heavy to bear your weight."

“ I know that, mademoiselle—but a great many of them will answer the purpose,” said the arch girl, smiling, “ and I will assuredly deliver you from your captivity ; but we will desist from our work now, lest that old Jezebel should come and catch us.”

They retired into the house, and in the evening renewed their labours, Annette being the chief engineer, while Elvira stood sentinel. The task took them several days to perform, and when Annette had thrown over a sufficient quantity of stones, all tied fast to ropes, which she thought would bear her weight, she twisted the ropes together, forming one great cable, then secured the end, by heaping a great pile of the ruins upon it, till it became immovable. Their young hearts palpitated with joy when they saw their work completed, and Annette ascended the cable with the agility of a British tar, to reconnoitre the surrounding country ; but how was her

her

her expectation damped, when she saw no wandering knight, no great prince, nor esquire, to fall in love with her and her mistress! Not any thing met her eye, but a wide expanse of country, which terminated with the deep shades of the distant woods. She descended with an aching heart to her impatient mistress, and with a sigh said—"They are not there, mademoiselle."

"Who are not there?" asked Elvira.

"Why the two chevaliers, that I prognosticated would be enamoured with us at first sight," answered Annette.

"Silly girl," said her mistress; "how could you be so romantic! Assist me to climb—perhaps I may be better pleased with the prospect."

Elvira was not so expert as her maid, having several falls before she attained the wished height, and when there, could discern no living object, but contemplated with pleasure the scene before her. Annette impatiently called to



know if she saw the wished-for objects. Elvira shook her head, and the disappointed French girl wrung her hands, saying—"Alas, alas! poor unfortunate damsels that we are!"

Her mistress was so diverted with her extravagance, that she let go her hold and fell. In attempting to rise she found her ankle was badly sprained, and with difficulty could set her foot to the ground. Annette had now real cause of uneasiness, affectionately lamenting her mistress's misfortune. Elvira desired her to moderate her grief, as they had still the means of escape in their power, when she should recover from the effects of her fall.

"Ah," said the feeling girl, "I had rather have been imprisoned here for life, than my dear mistress should have met with this accident."

She supported Elvira into the house, and they made the best of their way to her chamber, without being observed,  
where

where the poor sufferer was confined many days, but dared not own the cause of her indisposition. They were apprehensive their contrivance to escape might be discovered and destroyed. Annette was fearful of going alone to the spot, lest it should excite suspicion, as she never left her mistress, and of course her assiduities to her were unremitting.

Time at length abated the swelling, when Elvira was enabled to walk, with a little assistance from her companion, to the place which had caused them so much anxiety. The nearer they advanced, the more their apprehension increased; but, to their unspeakable joy, every thing remained as they left it.

Annette ascended the ropes, when the same cheerless prospect met her view as before, and she again returned, mortified at her ill success.

As soon as Elvira's ankle would allow her, they used to climb the cable, and sit on the top of the wall, amusing

themselves with laying various plans for their future conduct, after they should leave the castle, which was their determination to do, whenever Elvira felt herself able to walk a considerable distance, for they had rather encounter any dangers, than be left to the care of the disgusting Guzzina.

The invalid was nearly recovered, and they were as usual perched on the old wall, when Annette suddenly exclaimed—"There they are, mademoiselle—there they are!"

"Who, who?" asked her mistress.

"Our lovers that *are* to be," answered the maid.

Elvira looked in the direction which the other pointed out, and saw a gentleman, mounted on a mule, followed by a servant.

"Now is the time," said Annette; "now or never we shall make our fortunes! My dear lady, follow me down the  
ropes

ropes which hang on the other side the wall, and we shall be free for life."

"Perhaps," observed Elvira, "those strangers may not choose to protect us?"

"Oh, never fear," answered the French girl; "they will think themselves honoured with the confidence we shall place in them."

"But," said Elvira, "we have no change of clothes."

"Only follow me, and we shall have every thing this world can bestow," replied Annette. She at the same time slipped down the ropes, on the outside the wall, till she came to the ends where the stones were tied, and giving a sudden spring, found herself on firm ground.

"Oh, Annette!" exclaimed her mistress, "have you left me?"

"Only to catch you in my arms," she replied, "lest you should fall, and sprain your other ankle. Hasten, dear mademoiselle, hasten, for we have no time to lose!"

Elvira looked back at the castle, reflecting she had no protector within ; nor had she a friend in the whole world, save the poor simple girl who was waiting to receive her below ; and, without urging any further objections, she descended the ropes, and with the assistance of Annette, once more breathed the air of freedom.

With light hearts they tripped on, to meet the two objects they espied from the top of the wall ; while Annette, in anticipation, had entangled some great prince in the charms of her mistress, and enslaved his prime minister in her own ; but the geranium and myrtle, which grow wild in Spain, hid the gentlemen from her view. After some anxiety her eye once more espied them, and as she led her mistress on, began to form an address.—“ I will begin thus,” she said ; “ Great and mighty prince, deign to take under your protection two wandering virgins, just escaped from the castle  
of

of Corruption, whose predilection in your favour has induced them to throw themselves upon your honour, and the honour of your companion."

She probably would have made a speech of an hour long, had not a sudden turn brought her opposite the persons she was thinking of, when she began to address the foremost with—"Great and mighty prince——" but instead of proceeding further, gave a violent shriek, and stood motionless.

Elvira uttered not one word, but dropped lifeless on the ground.

The person Annette spoke to was great, and mighty too, for he was—De Torza—followed by Murdico!

The consternation was equal on all sides, and there perhaps never were four countenances which so strongly portrayed astonishment as those present.

Murdico was the first who recovered from surprise, and seizing hold on Annette, said—"What, you little French

devil, you thought to run away, did you—and mistook me for some great and mighty prince, hey? I will soon teach you that I am prince of the dungeons beneath the castle, where I shall lock you up for the rest of your days, you young jade! So you have been setting your French wits to work, and made your escape thus far, because forsooth you are so fond of me, I could not leave you twelve hours, but you must be running after me.”

Annette screamed and scratched, but could not disengage herself from the grasp of Murdico.

De Torza raised Elvira, being much concerned at her lifeless situation, saying to his man—“ This is the effect of your great care; this is a proof how securely you left the castle; this convinces me how far you may be trusted!”

“ I left the castle as safe as locks and chains could make it,” said Murdico; “ but suppose that old Beelzebub’s wife, Guzzina,

Guzzina, is in her cups, and the girls have stolen the bunch of keys from her side, for you know she keeps one set and I the other. With respect to how far I may be trusted, I think you have had proof enough of that before now."

"I have indeed," observed his master (who began to think he had said too much); "and it must be as you say, that Guzzina only is to blame: but how are we to recover my charge?"

"Give her a good shaking," said Murdico; "she is only in a swoon, and wants rousing."

"If you hurt my mistress, I will scratch your face, till no one knows you," interrupted Annette, who was still struggling to get away.

"Well done, spirit!" exclaimed her tormentor; "you do well to threaten me; and as to your attempts to get away, you have no more power than a fly in my hand. If ever you give me the slip again, I'll forgive you."



"I only want to get to my poor suffering mistress," sighed Annette; "liberty without her would be bondage."

"That is as much as to say that you have no wish to run away from such a handsome fellow as I am," Murdico observed, "unless your mistress could run with you."

"If sin was half as ugly as you are," replied Annette, "I should hate it worse than I do."

"You had better be quiet," said De Torza to his man, "or you will meet with your match. Let the girl loose a little."

Murdico took a leathern belt which bound a parcel to the back of his mule, and fastened it round the waist of Annette, who, as soon as she found herself loosened from his hold, darted to her mistress, rubbed her hands and temples; and with the help of a smelling-bottle she had in her pocket, slowly recovered her. El-  
vira

vira was restored to the miseries of her situation, and burst into tears.

De Torza endeavoured to sooth her, assured her she should want for no comfort it was in his power to bestow, within the boundaries of the castle, provided she would try to make herself happy there. His conduct surprised Annette, and puzzled Elvira, it was so contrary to what they expected.

“Perhaps, Annette,” said he, “you alone wish for freedom, and have enticed Elvira to follow? if that is the case, go; you are free, and need not enter my castle more.”

“My mistress,” asked Annette, “what is to become of her?”

“She must remain with me for life,” he replied.

“Then recall your generosity—take back your offered freedom,” said the affectionate girl; “for never will Annette taste liberty while her mistress may not share it with her.”

Elvira

Elvira extended her hand to this attached young creature, and wept upon her shoulder, for she felt such kindness too forcibly to speak.

“Bravo!” exclaimed Murdico; “this girl’s father must have been a clever fellow—I should not wonder if she proves to be my own.”

“Yours!” said Annette—“yours! It is true I never knew my parents, but Heaven forbid you should prove to be one of them! The matron of the Hospital des Enfants, in Paris, where I was brought up, told me she supposed my mother died soon after I was born, and that I was taken by an ill-looking man, who said he found me, wrapped up in old cloak, in a field. I had a paper pinned round my waist, praying whoever found me would compassionate my helplessness, and afford me that protection which the icy hand of death would soon prevent my mother from bestowing. The paper was signed——”

“What

“What name was it signed with?” eagerly demanded Murdico.

“Annette de Courville,” answered the French girl.

“Gods!” exclaimed Murdico, his pale lip quivering, “thou hast entwined a thousand snakes around my heart! Oh, conscience! I thought thou hadst been laid asleep for ever!”

“If you have any pity left,” said Annet, “do not, for Heaven’s sake, say—I am your child!”

“Too fatally thou art mine,” he replied; “thou art the child of thy murdered mother!”

The poor girl shrieked with horror; she could not kneel to such a parent, to ask him for his blessing—she could not entwine her arms around him, and receive his parental kiss—nor could she thank Heaven for restoring to her such a father.

The guilty parent stood abashed before his innocent child, and Elvira caught her

her as she was sinking from excess of feeling. Perhaps the grand inquisitor himself could not have intimidated this hardened sinner as did the first sight of his unfortunate girl.

She covered her eyes with her hands, to shut him from her view, saying—"I have no mother, and better had such a father remained unfound."

"This is an unlucky eclaireissement," said De Torza; "I would have given something if it had not taken place, for from my soul I pity the poor thing!—Do not take on so, Annette—you shall always find a friend in me."

"And a friend who shelters a murderer," sighed Annette; "and that murderer is—oh, distraction!—he is my——" she would have added "father," but the word choked her utterance; and De Torza took her up in his arms; and carried her to the castle. Elvira kept pace with him, endeavouring to sooth the sufferer's

sufferer's mind, forgetting her own sorrows in those of Annette.

Elvira had no wish now to leave the castle, for her only friend needed her assistance; and she entered a willing captive, in the hope of alleviating the sufferings of one so deservedly dear to her.

Murdico slowly followed at a distance, for depraved as he was, he could not see unmoved the havoc his own crimes had made, in the altered looks of his illegitimate offspring.

Elvira put her friend to bed, and tried to persuade her things were not so bad as she apprehended: but vain were her arguments—Annette understood them not, for reason had taken flight in the horrid thought that she was the child of a murderer!

Elvira watched many weeks with ceaseless anxiety, but Annette, to all appearance, was sinking fast to her grave—her amiable mistress was worn to a shadow, through grief and fatigue—De  
Torza

Torza was distracted on account of the declining health of his ward—and Murdico was sunk into a sullen gloom.

Could seducers foresee the poignant miseries they entail on their innocent offspring by the gratification of their lawless passion, perhaps seduction would not be so common a crime as it is; but they willingly close their eyes to the truth, and are sometimes the first to brand the child of their guilt with the name of *bastard*. Let such fathers consider, that their illegitimate children have the same natural claims to their affection as those born in wedlock—nay more, for these innocents are exposed from their birth to the scorn of an unfeeling world—shunned by some as a pestilence—pointed at by others for a crime of which their parents alone were guilty; and in some parts of the earth, at the inexperienced age of fourteen, according to law, are left unprotected by their parents, in their native country! Surely  
those

those who are born under these distressing circumstances, ought to have our compassion instead of our scorn.

The sufferings of Annette were occasioned by the crimes of her father; and De Torza saw if she was not saved, Elvira would be lost, for her broken heart could not support the separation from her friend. If ever De Torza felt, it was at this time; and Elvira perceiving his uneasiness on her account and Annette's, began to think she had formed a wrong opinion of him. He had spared no expence in procuring medical aid to restore the sufferer, which had proved ineffectual; and it was at this juncture he went to a neighbouring monastery, in search of a priest whose rhetoric could persuade Elvira to bear the loss of her companion, whose death seemed inevitable.

Father Paulo volunteered his services on this occasion, when De Torza introduced him to his ward. Elvira sensibly felt



felt the kindness of her guardian, in choosing such an adviser, whose deep erudition and unfeigned religion, formed a striking contrast to the other inmates of the castle.

Paulo admired the beautiful character of Elvira as much as she did him; but contrary to expectation, he spoke little to her on the subject he was brought there for, turning his attention to the invalid, who, he affirmed, had been wrong treated. Among other things, he had studied botany, and understood the peculiar virtues of some plants better than many chemists in Toledo. Elvira caught at the hope of saving her friend, entreating him to undertake the management of her. He did so, and by slow degrees abated the fever, reason resumed her seat, when Annette was restored to her mistress, by being pronounced out of danger.

Then it was Paulo argued with Elvira on the fallacy of fixing her affections

tions on any thing short of Heaven, for he knew the inutility of pouring in his precepts before, while the mind was engrossed by one object to the exclusion of all others. She confessed her error, saw and admired the truth of his doctrine, and thought her obligation could never be sufficiently expressed to De Torza for procuring her such an instructor.

Annette, though out of danger, remained in a languid state of mind and body, constantly ruminating on the misfortunes of her birth, occasioned by the crimes of her father; and the active, spritely, gay Annette, was never seen to smile again. Melancholy ever after sat upon her brow, for she shuddered at the thought of being the offspring of such a parent; and the good priest found it difficult to reconcile her so far to him as to bear him in her sight.

“ But,” she would say, “ though I cannot honour him as I wish—though I  
cannot

cannot esteem him, yet he shall have my prayers, which I will unceasingly offer up to Heaven in his behalf, that his depraved heart may be changed."

She had a strange desire to know the particulars of her mother's fate, which Murdico was equally as desirous to conceal: but Paulo, who was in possession of the circumstances, having become confessor to all the inmates of the castle, exhorted him to let her know the worst, for horrid as the facts were, he thought it better to trust Annette with them, than to leave her in a state of continual suspense.

Murdico at last consented, when De Torza, father Paulo, Elvira, and Annette, took their seats. The two females were surprised at De Torza being present, but his motive was known only to himself.

Murdico, with folded arms, and his eyes fixed on the ground, thus began—  
"It is plain, Annette, you do not love  
your

your father, and your being informed of past events will only make you hate him still more; but as you persist in your request, and father Paulo says it is my duty to satisfy you, I have agreed to comply, and will now give you my history."

"Not *all* your history," said De Torza, with agitation; "your daughter only wishes to be informed of the particulars relative to her mother."

"Well, well," replied Murdico, "that is what I mean.—I am a native of Switzerland; my parents were poor but honest, and took great pains to instil their principles into me. The dull routine of daily labour I was accustomed to with them ill suited my restless disposition; and at the age of sixteen, I determined to leave them and travel. My father opposed my intention, and my mother was distracted at the idea, for I was their only child; but all could not alter my resolution, and I soon after hired myself

myself as valet to a gentleman who was travelling. I had not been long with my master, before I found his principles were more vitiated than my own; but as it is the custom for servants to imitate their superiors, he soon made me a proselyte to his irregular habits, and often said I was a lad after his own heart; for I do not suppose that two men ever committed more excesses than I and my master, who was called don——”

“No matter what he was called,” interrupted De Torza.

“True,” observed Murdico, and continued—“We travelled through many countries, taking Italy and France in our way; and as we generally amused ourselves with the ladies, we certainly had at times many fine women in our possession; for when my master saw one who struck his fancy, whether married or single it mattered not, he would break through all bounds to get at her, and always found in me a ready assistant.

Sometimes,

Sometimes, when he was tired of them, he would offer to turn them over to me; which I seldom accepted of, for as I was rather particular, I generally catered for myself. He was a man of immense wealth, which enabled him to get out of the many scrapes his irregular conduct brought him into. We stopped some time in the gay city of Paris, and plunged with avidity into the vortex of pleasure always to be found there. Women, wine, and dice, filled up our hours; for, like master like man, he never pursued any vice which I did not follow; and I begin to think, had chance placed me under a man of different habits, I should not have done those things I have done."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed De Torza, "you was not desired to relate the history of your master, but part of your own."

"I know it," replied Murdico; "but in some particulars they are interwoven.—My master went one day into a jeweller's shop in the suburbs of Paris, to get

a diamond reset in a ring, which was given to him by one of his Italian mistresses, when he caught a glimpse of a beautiful girl, who was reading in a small parlour behind the shop. One peep at her was enough, for he came home to me intoxicated with the sight. He became a great customer to the jeweller, in the hope of seeing his lovely daughter, but was constantly disappointed: for whether the father suspected my master's intentions or not, we could not tell, but the loadstone never made her appearance. The crafty don——”

“It is of no consequence what sort of a don he was,” said De Torza; “cannot you call him master?”

“Well then, my crafty master,” said Murdico, petulantly, “sent me to reconnoitre, and left off going himself. The second visit I paid the jeweller, I saw the being who had distracted my master, who was of all creatures I had seen the most lovely. I had stolen many  
pretty

pretty girls for my master, but was determined to have this one for myself. He would have given his whole fortune to possess her, loading me with money to obtain the means of procuring her. We laid many plans for this purpose, rejecting them as soon as formed. I watched the family of the jeweller, finding it consisted of himself, his daughter, two female servants, and a young man who always slept in the shop. We were cautious in our proceedings, having determined to enter the house at a window on the first story, where I conjectured the young lady slept. In the dead of the night I mounted a light ladder, which I had procured for the purpose. while my master waited below to keep watch. I opened the window with little difficulty, and softly entered the chamber. All was still as death, when I drew the curtains aside, intending to take the lady out of bed to give her to my master, who had mounted the ladder after



me, and was waiting on the top of it to receive her, when the beams of the moon shone on the person in bed, and to my utter astonishment I found I was going to steal the father instead of the daughter. I gave a sudden start, which awakened the sleeper, who sprang up, and seized me. A violent scuffle ensued; he called loudly for help, and his daughter, who I afterwards found slept in the next room, came running in, when I let go my hold on the old gentleman, and seized my prize. My master entered, and engaged him, while the terrified girl fainted in my arms. Mr. De Courville

———”

“De Courville!” exclaimed Annette; “then you are now speaking of my poor mother and her father?”

“To be sure I am,” answered Murdico; “and as I was saying, he took us for robbers, telling us to take all he was worth, except his beloved child.—‘That is the only jewel we mean to rob you of,’

of,' said my incautious master.—De Courville knew his voice, and upbraided him with his perfidy. An altercation took place, while I moved off with my lifeless burden, which the father perceiving, kneeled, wept, entreated me to leave his child, but to no purpose, for I got her through the window, and finding he was becoming desperate, left him to the care of my master: then throwing my cloak over the young lady, who had not any thing on but her night-clothes, made the best of my way with her to a place of concealment known only to myself. I left her in safe hands, and returned to our hotel, where I found my master pacing the room.—‘What have you done with the girl?’ said he.—‘Lost her,’ I answered.—‘Then we are lost too,’ he observed, ‘and must be off.’—‘What, are you going to run away for stealing a girl?’ I asked.—‘Not for that only; but look here,’ he said, shewing me some spots of blood on his

F 3

clothes.—

clothes.—‘What mean these?’ said I.—  
‘Why, the old fellow became so outrageous,’ he answered, ‘that he would have killed me, if I had not saved him the trouble, by plunging my stiletto into him, when he in a few minutes expired.’—‘A pretty job we have made of it!’ I observed; ‘what is to be done?’—‘Nothing remains for us to do, but to be off,’ he replied; ‘therefore pack up immediately.’—I told him he might go if he chose, but I should remain.—He said, if I was fearless on the subject, it would create less suspicion if I remained behind.—I endeavoured to rally him out of his intention of going, but could not, though I reminded him this was not the first time he had shed blood.—‘True,’ said he; ‘yet there was something so piteous in the dying lamentations of the old man about his child, that the sound will never be out of my ears.’

“Before daybreak he set off alone for Switzerland, where he was to remain  
till!

ill I sent him intelligence; and I instantly flew to my beautiful girl, who I found recovered from her swoon, but ignorant of who had conveyed her there. She entreated me to befriend her so far as to take her out of the people's hands she was with, and restore her to her father—said she would adore me as long as she lived, if I would but grant her request. I made her at first believe I would do my best to release her, when she looked on me as her guardian angel. I returned to the hotel, where I was told of the murder of De Courville, and a great stir was made about it, as well as the absence of the daughter. Rewards were offered, the police were immediately on the alert, but not any thing transpired to elucidate the darkness that enveloped the transaction.

“ I kept mademoiselle De Courville in ignorance of her father's death, spending most of my time with her, and at last completed her ruin. From that mo-

ment she beheld me with the most bitter hatred. I contrived to keep my master away, by sending him exaggerated accounts of the search after the murderer; but the fact was, the public became weary of the affair, and it gradually died away. Constant possession sometimes produces satiety, which was the case with me, for as I thought myself absolute master of her, about whom I was mad after when withheld from me, I now began to be quite indifferent to the object: yet I dared not give her liberty, lest a developement should take place. Mademoiselle's reproaches and tears were incessant, for she was far advanced in pregnancy; and though I wished to get rid of her, yet I dreaded a separation. The time of her *accouchement* came on, when she was delivered of a fine female child: she ceased to upbraid me, entreating me to be a father to her infant, saying it would soon be motherless, for grief had worn her to a shadow.

shadow. Five weeks after, this unfortunate young creature contrived to make her escape, with her babe in her arms. I pursued her as soon as she was missed, and nearly overtook her in a field at the back of her father's house. I called, entreating her to stop; but she quickened her pace as much as her little remaining strength would allow, when maddened by desperation, for fear these transactions should come to light, I—I—shot her!

Annette had left her seat unperceived by all present, was kneeling at her father's feet when he came to the last sentence, and giving a loud shriek, said—“Was it my mother whom you shot? do I now behold my mother's murderer?”

Murdico turned away his head, and a violent flood of tears in some degree relieved the oppressed heart of his wretched daughter. When she had got over in some measure the shock of her mother's fate, she begged to know what

became of the child Murdico had mentioned?

He replied—"That child was yourself, Annette. Though I was familiar with murder—though I was never before assailed by so great a weakness as pity, yet I could not raise my hand against you. I took you out of your dead mother's arms, pulled off my cloak, and wrapped you in it. I examined the remains of the unfortunate Annette De Courville, and found that life was extinct, but knew not what to do with the body. After perplexing myself some time, I threw it into a ditch which was round the field, and pulled up some shrubs, with which I covered it. I hastened from the spot, took you up in my arms, but knew not where to place you. If I had returned to the wretches who for the sake of gold became accessory to your mother's destruction, without her, inquiry might have been made, and the murder found out. As I was passing swiftly  
on,

on, not knowing which way to turn, a large building caught my eye, which I saw by the inscription over the gate was an hospital for foundlings, or deserted infants. I stopped, opened the cloak, and looked at you; for though I had deprived you of a mother, I was solicitous to secure you protection. I discovered the paper pinned round your waist, that you mentioned, which was signed with your mother's name, and was exactly word for word as you described. I knew it to be in her handwriting, but did not take it away, thinking it might be a passport to the heart of some person who was not a stranger to compassion. Your mother had doubtless written it under the apprehension that she should not live to reach her father's house, for she never knew of his death."

Here Annette interrupted her father, by putting into his hand the very paper he was speaking of, which the good ma-



tron had packed up with her clothes, telling her to preserve it with care, as it might lead to the discovery of her parents.

Murdico trembled on beholding the paper, saying he could swear it to be in the handwriting of mademoiselle De Courville.

Murdico then resumed, saying—"I put you into a kind of cradle, which was fixed in the porch of the Hotel des Enfants, being so contrived as to ring a bell, if moved with the slightest touch. This I was not aware of, and had not effected my escape before the porter made his appearance. I briefly told him I had found you in a field, and ran off. I went to my lodgings at the hotel, packed up my clothes, and bade adieu to Paris. On my way from that city, I was propelled by a feeling I never could account for, to visit the spot where I had left your mother. I started at the sight of one of her white hands, that was  
left

left uncovered by the bushes, and which seemed to point me out as her murderer. Not the horror of seeing her weltering in her blood, affected me half so much, for whichever way I turned, the hand seemed to point at me. I neither dared go nor stay—this being the only time in my life I ever felt any thing like fear, for conscience told me the owner of that hand was innocent as the light of heaven. I at last became desperate, pulled off my surtout, threw it upon the hand, then ran away with all the speed I was capable of. I have since thought it fortunate I visited that fatal field, for the whiteness of the hand of the murdered Annette De Courville might have attracted attention, when the circumstance would probably have been discovered before I was out of reach. I quitted France with the utmost haste, scarcely stopping till I joined my iniquitous master in Switzerland. I never visited Paris again, till don De Torza was distressed

distressed to procure a companion for donna Elvira, who would consent to be shut up with her mistress for life, which was a lapse of fourteen years. I then offered to go to the Hotel des Enfants, to procure such a one. Of all the young girls the trustees of that establishment shewed me, I could fix on you only, because I thought your features totally unlike those of the infant I had left there, and from your height supposed you to be older than my child. I was particularly cautious not to choose my own daughter, and by a strange fatality fixed on her alone, which leads me to suppose that fate ordained you should be made acquainted with the circumstances relative to your birth. I have little more to add, save to imprecate curses on the head of my guilty master, for he it was who initiated me into acts of murder."

De Torza bit his lips; Annette turned from her father with horror, when the  
good

good Paulo led her out of the room, supported by Elvira.

If there was a being on earth who deserved commiseration in its full extent, it was the unfortunate Annette, who, free from her father's vices, inherited all her mother's virtues, and keenly deplored the crimes of the one and the misfortunes of the other. She would have retired to a convent, but untoward circumstances would not permit her mistress to go with her, and the bond of friendship subsisting between them was so pure, that each confessed they could not bear a separation from the other.

The prayers of the mistress ascended to heaven's gate, ushered in by those of the maid, for the repose of the soul of the murdered Annette De Courville, and for absolution on the guilty Mordico.

Father Paulo had a wide field for exerting his ministerial functions, for no priest had at one time under his care

two souls more blackened by crime than De Torza and his man, or two more free from guile than Elvira and her maid.

Paulo preached, and Murdico trembled ; but, like Felix of old, he dismissed both the preacher and his doctrine from his mind, and returned like the swine to its wallowing in the mire. On De Torza no impression could be made, for his haughty soul seemed to spurn all pardon here and hereafter ; but yet he affected to pity Annette, and studied to please Elvira.

His base intentions did not escape the penetrating eye of the priest, who failed not to give him wholesome reproof, which as usual was thrown away, for De Torza, with a smile of contempt, told him to keep his advice for those who needed it. He soon developed his character, and avowed himself what he had long been, the admirer of his ward.

The beautiful girl was in her sixteenth year, and for the first time discovered,  
what

what no one was a stranger to but herself, namely, that De Torza was essential to her peace. His natural powers to please, his uncommon fascination, which no one possessed in so great a degree, his constant attention to her comforts, made an early impression on the too flexible heart of Elvira, who was a total stranger to the man she loved.

On the first declaration of his passion to the unsuspecting girl, she blushed, hesitated, blushed again; while the enraptured De Torza, with exultation saw her embarrassment, and with greedy eye beheld her countless blushes, as they rose in quick succession to his view.

It may be asked how Elvira could fix her affections on a man who was twice her age, and on one who had for years confined her within his own domain? but it was by that confinement he preserved her for himself, as he suffered no man to enter that part of the castle, save  
Murdico

Murdico and Paulo, in neither of whom he feared a rival.

The priest warned Elvira of the danger in giving her affections to such a man as her guardian ; but Elvira loved, and thought Paulo too harsh, in drawing such a likeness of De Torza, who was handsome, sensible, and, when he had any point to gain, could make himself agreeable, for he seemed to live for her alone.

The affliction of Annette had settled into a calm resignation. She was pleased at the prospect of her mistress's happiness, for both being free from guile themselves, suspected it not in others.

Things wore a lighter prospect at the castle than usual, and De Torza one day asked Elvira when she would complete his happiness.

She replied—" I do not think our marriage should take place till I have attained my seventeenth year."

" Marriage !" exclaimed De Torza ; " I never

never named that word to you, nor ever led you to believe that I wished for such a union! No, none of the shackles of wedlock for me—I want no priestcraft, no church ceremonies to tie me up for life!”

He might have gone on much longer without interruption, for his auditors stood with her hands clasped, the statue of surprise. It was true he never had mentioned marriage to her, but she judged his heart by her own, and too late perceived her error.

His countenance darkened, as he silently rose and left the room. He sent Annette to her mistress, whose affectionate heart felt the disappointment as though it had been her own. Elvira wept not, grieved not, and with becoming pride endeavoured to detest the man she could no longer esteem; though this effort was of short duration, for Elvira had once loved, and found it impossible to hate. She kept constantly in her apartment,



ment, refusing to see De Torza, who frequently sent to beg an interview with her.

Many weeks passed in this way, till he began to fear he had gone too far ; for though he did not absolutely love, yet he liked Elvira better than any other, and proposed, if she would hear what he had to say, that both Annette and father Paulo should be present, to which she consented.

The parties met, and De Torza said —“ Think not, Elvira, you are out of my power, because I thus condescend to sue for an interview ; but before I resort to force, I wish to explain my reasons for not entering into an immediate marriage. I have a relation living, who forbids my forming an union with any one, though it were an empress ; and the reasons of this person are founded on such peculiar circumstances, that I dare not run the hazard, till death has removed this obstacle out of the way.”

“ Then

“Then wait,” said Elvira, “till you are at liberty to marry me.

“That I will *not* do,” De Torza answered; “but if you will consent to make me happy now, I will give you a bond drawn up in any form you please, which father Paulo shall witness, that I will marry you the day my capricious relative dies.”

“Leave me,” said Elvira; “if you have no other proposal to make, leave me instantly; and remember the first moment you attempt any further insult, that there is a statement of your conduct I have represented, addressed to the king, which now lies at father Paulo’s convent, and will be forwarded the instant you put your threat in execution. You have roused me, De Torza, and I now defy you!”

Had a storm of thunder battered the castle about his ears, he could not have been more confounded; and turning to Paulo said—“This is your work, I suppose?”

pose? this arises from suffering a busy meddling priest to make part of my family."

"Your surmise is just," replied the old man; "it is I who have advised donna Elvira how to act."

"And it is I who will prevent your machinations from taking effect," interrupted the enraged De Torza, at the same moment laying his hand on his sword.

"Strike!" exclaimed Paulo; "for if our abbot does not receive my order to the contrary, Elvira's letter will be on its way to Madrid to-morrow morning."

The haughty don started, paused, let his hand fall from his sword, struck his forehead, and left the room. He was now caught in his own toils, and like a chafed lion, exhausted himself with rage, for he saw no way of extricating himself out of the perilous situation his base intention on Elvira had plunged him into. His old counsellor Murdico was  
summoned

summoned to attend him, who was equally chagrined as his master. After considering some time, he said—"There is but one way of escape."

"Name it," exclaimed De Torza.

"You can secure your safety only by leaping into the chains of wedlock," replied Murdico.

"What poltroon is it gives me this advice? must I be outwitted by a girl? am I to submit to one so completely in my power?" asked the master.

"You deceive yourself," answered the man; "it is you who are in her power, and not only you, but I also; for if her letter is forwarded to the king, the very names of De Torza and Murdico will pull down vengeance upon us; therefore for our mutual safety you must marry her."

"Repentance catch me if I do!" observed the outrageous Spaniard.

"Take your own way," replied his adviser, "and I will take mine. It is  
now

now evening, and in twelve hours the accusations of donna Elvira will be forwarded to Madrid, unless you alter your resolution. I will give you two hours to consider the matter ; for if you do not change your determination, I shall join Elvira, and give up your life to save my own. If *you* have a predilection to be broken on the wheel, I have not."

Murdico left his master, a prey to passion, revenge, obstinacy, disappointment, and all the pangs of an accusing conscience ; for De Torza well knew his life was at the disposal of his man, who had too often witnessed and shared his acts of atrocity ; yet madness accompanied the thought that he must submit where he intended to conquer.

Murdico returned at his appointed time, who found his master exhausted, but not subdued.—" I see your proud spirit cannot submit," said the man ; " and must, as I have done aforetime, take upon me to act for you."

" Do

“Do as your wise head directs,” his master answered; “only get me out of this thralldom.”

Murdico went to Paulo, and begged his attendance on his master, who he said was ill of a raging fever; at the same time apologizing to donna Elvira for De Torza's absence, saying—“Love, my dear donna, mighty love, is the occasion of all: he has commissioned me to say, that as he cannot have you his own way, he must yield to yours, whenever his illness will permit.”

Paulo repaired to his patient's chamber, who certainly was indisposed, but it was from the effects of evil passions, when the good priest prescribed with his usual ability.

Elvira was softened at his account, entreating the good man to forbid the abbot sending the letter, and Paulo gave an unsealed note to that effect into the hands of Murdico, who read it to his

master, and joyfully hastened with it to the abbot.

The minds of De Torza and his man were relieved, the latter not forgetting to take to himself the merit of disengaging them from their embarrassments. De Torza, after his rage was over, was as solicitous for the marriage taking place as he had been averse to it; for weighty reasons told him how unpleasant a thing an investigation into his conduct would be. Elvira thought there was no occasion for haste; and as some part of his behaviour had offended her, she ought to put him upon his good conduct for a year; and if she had no reason to find fault with him during that time, she would then give him her hand.

The artful De Torza, fearing he should break out into some inconsistencies before half that period had passed, used all his rhetoric, and with the silver tongue of flattery said, it was love for her that had led him to be impatient of possessing

possessing her. Even if he had stabbed father Paulo, it would have been through love to her; but now he was willing to make atonement, and to run all risks with his capricious relative, by marrying her immediately.

Elvira, half consenting half denying, yielded to his importunities; and at the end of two months, instead of twelve, gave him her hand.

Paulo officiated, Annette and Murdico were present. When the ceremony was about half performed, Guzzina staggered in, and addressing Elvira said (at the same time pointing to De Torza)—  
*“If you marry that man, you cannot be his wife!”*

The speech was altogether unintelligible; Elvira looked uneasy—the priest paused—Murdico with some difficulty got Guzzina out of the room—and De Torza desired the ceremony might proceed, which was finished without further interruption.



In a few months after marriage De Torza thought it unnecessary to wear the disguise he had latterly assumed, and acted the tyrant which nature and practice had formed him.

Elvira saw, when it was too late, that she had doomed herself to suffer all the various turns of his capricious humour, often thinking she could bear it better from any other than the man she loved; but Heaven had been merciful in giving her two such friends as Annette and Paulo. She looked forward to the time when she should make De Torza a father, which she ardently wished might soften his morose disposition, and with meek resignation bore up against the rigour of her fate.

The time of her *accouchement* drew near, when Guzzina strolled into that part of the castle, and meeting Elvira said—"When De Torza married you, he then had another wife, who——"

She did not add more, for those were  
the

the last words she spoke, as De Torza and Murdico came in at the instant, and hearing what she had said, each stabbed her in several places. The unfortunate woman was soon dispatched, who had formerly been servant to De Torza's first wife, and was by him seduced, then taken to his castle near Toledo, where she endeavoured to drown reflection by drinking. The short history of the miserable Guzzina was related to Elvira by Murdico, some years after; but who this first wife was he never knew.

Elvira did not witness the end of the wretched woman, for the words—“*when De Torza married you, he then had another wife*”—had deprived her of sense, and no one witnessed the transaction but Annette, who shrieked, and ran frantically about, saying—“There is another murder committed by my dreadful father!”

Murdico bore off the body, and deposited it in the vaults beneath the cas-

tle; while De Torza, whose countenance flashed vengeance on the distracted girl, bade her follow him, at the same time carrying the still-insensible Elvira to her chamber, who soon after recovered animation, and sighing, asked—"Will my yet unborn babe, when it is ushered into this iniquitous world, have a legal claim to its father? no, no, no!"

She fell into strong hysterics, when fit succeeded fit, and shortly after a premature birth was the consequence, for Elvira bore a son three weeks before its time. Contrary to expectation, the child was alive, and Annette, who had forgot every thing but her mistress's misfortunes, clasping the infant to her breast, vowed in case of Elvira's death to rear it as her own.

In this state of affairs father Paulo arrived at the castle, who had been absent some days on business belonging to his convent, which the abbot could not attend to, on account of indisposition.

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He was shocked at the information of Annette, and did his utmost to soothe the much-to-be-pitied Elvira, who was sunk into so low a state by grief, that her life was despaired of, and who incessantly wept over her child, on account of its illegitimacy. She desired De Torza, if he had an atom of compassion in his nature left, not to attempt to see her, but to indulge her so far as to allow her to give her son a name, which he complied with; and she had her son baptized by the name of Orlando, after her father. The mother's ill state of health communicated to the child, who expired, or appeared to do so, at the end of three weeks."

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Here the living Orlando interrupted the hermit, and broke the thread of the story, saying—"I was puzzled at hearing of the death of this infant, who I had no doubt was myself, and asked my

mother to clear up this enigma. From my age I must have been born much about the same time, and from my name I concluded I was Elvira's first son; and asked her if she had had any other than the one she mentioned? She replied she had not, and it was out of her power to elucidate the mystery."

The hermit again proceeded with the account of Elvira.

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"She kissed the icy lips of her babe, thanked Heaven it had escaped the hands of its unnatural father, constantly praying the time might shortly come which would unite her to its pure spotless soul in bliss eternal.

Here father Paulo gently rebuked her, saying—"My daughter, you should pray for resignation to the will of Heaven, whether it be life or death."

The child was interred by order of De Torza, on the following morning,  
in

in the vaults beneath the castle. Elvira found it difficult to part with its loved form, for she would hang over its little features, and think had it pleased Heaven to spare this child, she might have had in process of time a protector who would have made her wrongs his own; yet on the other hand she thought it impious to arraign the Almighty will, being confident that her loss was her infant's eternal gain.

The reasonings of the good priest, the faithful assiduities of the amiable Annette, and a complete resignation to the decrees of her Creator, brought Elvira through this time of trial, who was, in every sense of the word, a Catholic without bigotry.

When she was sufficiently convalescent, which was not for many months after, she advised with her two friends as to the propriety of leaving De Torza for ever, who though married to her, was not her husband in point of law, so long

as his first wife was living. Where to fly, was the question. Her property, though immense, was all in the hands of De Torza; for Elvira had not a single ducat in her own possession. An appeal to the king was the only method of regaining her fortune; but that would be dangerous to the man who had wronged her, and she rejected it, not wishing to bring him to public justice.

Paulo made known her case to the abbot, who admired her for not having recourse to the revenge so fully in her power, and gave her out of his own purse sufficient to defray her expences to whatever convent she wished to retire to, with her faithful Annette, promising to pay for their board so long as it should please God to spare him. Elvira gratefully accepted the abbot's offer, and prepared to leave the castle.

The difficulty of escaping was not so great as heretofore, for Paulo had free egress and regress, who would not allow the  
the

the females to proceed a step without him; and at daybreak, before they thought the inmates of the castle were stirring, this attached trio set forward.

Elvira turned to take a last look at the castle, which only wanted a good man for its master to have made her happy. There dwelt the only one she ever did, or ever could love, and there were deposited, for aught she knew, the remains of her dear infant.

Elvira had at this time completed her eighteenth year, and though so young, had experienced disappointment in its widest scope; for too poignantly she felt she had fixed her affections on a villain. It was true her friend Paulo would have saved her from all she had suffered; but being innocent herself, she could not comprehend the depths of depravity which some minds will sink to, when determined to satisfy their every wish, unrestrained by the checks of honour, virtue, or compassion.



Elvira sighed as she turned from the building, and wished that Heaven would bestow on De Torza a better heart. She again lingered on the spot, then burst into a flood of tears, which shook her frame. It was the last struggle of a weakness she blushed to own, and leaning on the arm of her venerable friend, proceeded slowly on her way.

Annette grieved for her mistress and her mistaken father, silently praying that the bolt of Heaven might be withheld from falling on the head of the abandoned Murdico.

They took a circuitous route, not venturing to travel through any beaten path, and it was midday when they arrived at a large unfrequented forest, that sheltered them from the scorching rays of the sun, which were at this time insupportable. Paulo had provided some refreshments in a scrip, that he had slung across his shoulder, which he and his companions partook of, being deter-  
mined

mined to remain in the wood till the heat was abated, as they could then arrive at their place of destination before night.

They had remained in this cool retreat about two hours, when they heard voices at a distance, which seemed to approach nearer, and suddenly a numerous party, mounted on mules, struck into the forest, dispersing in different directions, tied their beasts to the trees, then throwing themselves on the ground beneath the shade of their thick foliage, seemed to have come there only for the purpose of shelter from the sun. Elvira sickened with fear, Annette trembled, Paulo crossed himself, yet neither of them spoke a word, but concealed themselves in the thick underwood.

“ I say,” said one of the men who lay on the ground, addressing his companion nearest him, “ this is a dangerous undertaking.”

“ I say you are a coward,” replied the other.

“ By

“By St. James, I’ll make you know the contrary!” exclaimed the first speaker, starting up, and seizing his comrade.

The dispute was perceived by the rest, who crying out “bravo!” encouraged the fight.

Neither of the wrestlers loosened their hold, till one of them trod on Annette’s hand, who lay concealed beneath the bushes. A violent shriek seemed to electrify the men, who instantly let go each other, and one of them cried out — “The voice of a woman, by the gods! now, my lads, for a hunt.”

They forgot their quarrel, when the whole party began to beat about the bushes for their prey. The man who had trod on the hand of Annette did not search long, but dragging her forth, said he had found his prize, and was satisfied. One of the bystanders discovered Elvira, and claimed her for himself; while another found poor Paulo, but was not at all pleased with what  
had

had fallen to his share, saying, as he had given many a pretty girl to their leader, he would now make him a present of an old priest.

“ I question whether he will accept your gift,” said one of them, laughing, “ while he may have his choice of these two sweet creatures,” turning to the females; “ but here he comes—let him speak for himself.”

The trembling fugitives raised their eyes, and beheld what they had never seen before—the Brazen Mask !”

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Here the hermit stopped, saying to Orlando—“ Had that dreadful being any thing to do with your mother?”

“ Proceed, and you will understand,” replied Orlando; when the old man continued to read.

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“ On seeing this strange figure, who  
was

was enveloped in a long black cloak, with a large plume of black feathers in his hat, the two females were more alarmed than before, and called on Paulo to save them, who stepping forward, thus addressed the Mask—"Most terrific, grand, and awful figure! whether your intentions are good or evil, I know not; but before you give judgment against me and my companions, let me entreat you will grant us an impartial hearing."

The Mask made a slight inclination of the head, and Paulo went on—"We are travelling to a convent, a few miles distant from here, where I shall leave the females, who intend to take the veil, and have begged my protection to guide them to their place of destination. My story is short, my request is simple—namely, liberty."

The whole party of brigands burst into a loud laugh, and the Mask, in a deepened voice, answered—"Most impertinent,

pertinent, bold, and contemptible reptile! whether you take me for an ass or an idiot, I know not; but before I grant your request, let me insist on your giving me and my comrades the name of the convent to which you are going."

Paulo shook his head, and the Mask continued—"We are travelling to our cave, a few *yards* distant from here, where I shall leave the ladies, who I do *not* intend to take the veil, and who are not in want of *your* protection to guide them to their place of destination. My resolve is short, my command is positive—namely, submission."

"Bravo!" shouted the whole company.

Paulo raised his eyes to heaven, crossed himself, and remained silent; Annette wept bitterly; while Elvira knelt to the Mask, saying—"I do not know who or what you are, but suppose you to be a man, and may consequently infer you are not void of compassion.

If

If mild pity ever dwelt within your breast, perform one act of generosity, by releasing us; for if you detain me, every moment of my existence will be more wretched than the past; and should my adversary overtake us, my life will be forfeited."

The Mask raised her, and replied—"I do not ask who or what you are, but suppose you to be a lady, and may consequently infer you are not void of contradiction. If mild pity ever dwelt within your breast, perform one act of sincerity, by living with us; for if you forsake me, every moment of my existence will be more wretched than the past; and should your enemies overtake you, their lives shall be forfeited."

The Mask ceased, and ordered his men to blindfold the captives, and conduct them to the place he had chosen for their future abode.

Elvira and her friends plainly saw there was no way of escape, therefore  
silently

silently submitted to their fate. They did not appear to have walked a great distance, before they perceived themselves descending a vast number of steps. Elvira's foot slipped, when she fell a considerable depth.

"Scoundrel!" vociferated the Mask, "where was your gallantry when you let the lady fall? leave her to me."

She instantly felt herself in the arms of some person, who carried her the rest of the way, placed her on a seat, then taking the bandage off her eyes—"Now, lady," said he, "you are arrived at your place of destination, and shall not want any thing but what the priest demanded, namely, liberty."

Elvira sighed, wondering where the misfortunes of her chequered life would lead her to at last.

Annette was led in, followed by Paulo; but they were not guarded by the same persons they had seen in the wood. The one who held Annette was  
a fine,



a fine, handsome, dark young man ; and the other who led on Paulo, was what any one would draw for the representation of a murderer.

Annette clasped her hands, saying—  
“ My mistress—oh ! where is my mistress ! ”

“ So, so,” said Paulo’s attendant, “ we have taken the maid as well as the mistress. Now in my opinion the maid is the prettiest of the two.”

“ What business has such an old seahorse as you to give an opinion on beauty ? ” asked Annette’s keeper.

“ Go on—go on,” replied the other, “ for no one has a right to express his sentiments, but our captain—no one has the liberty to look at a girl, but him—nor to run a man through the body, but at his command ! ”

The Mask ordered him to be silent, desiring the handkerchiefs to be removed from the prisoners’ eyes, telling them he should leave them for the present, to enjoy  
joy

joy each other's company; then bidding the captain and the ill-looking man follow him, quitted the place, bolting the door on the outside. The apartment the fugitives were in was a large square cavern, dug exceedingly deep in the ground, with a lamp suspended from the top; for a ray of daylight never cheered the gloom, which reigned triumphant there.

Annette found comfort even in this situation, for she thanked Heaven she was not separated from her beloved mistress; Paulo exhorted his companions to look above this miserable spot in the creation for relief; and bade them remember, if they were immured lower still in the earth, they could not be placed out of the reach of an Almighty hand.

The mind of Elvira was free from the weakness of her sex, and rose superior to her misfortunes; and with her two friends had just determined to bear up  
against

against the pressure of her fate, when a violent rush was made at the door, and the voice of the Mask exclaimed —  
“ Hold!—enter, and you die !”

“ She is mine,” answered another ;  
“ and have her I will !”

The door of the cavern was burst open, when several armed men rushed in, tumbling one over the other, with the Brazen Mask in their rear, who coolly and majestically walked up to Elvira, without speaking.

Paulo placed himself before her, saying—“ I am an old man, and a stranger to the art of fighting ; but I will receive all your swords in my breast, ere you shall harm this lady.”

“ Brave man !” said the Mask, clapping him on the shoulder, “ you are on my side then ; but fear not these miscreants, who are too well acquainted with the nerve of my arm, to attempt an injury to those I choose to defend.”

“ We will shew you the contrary,” replied

plied one of the men, leaping upon the Mask, who received the man on the point of his sword, and threw him shrieking back again. His comrades thought to avenge his death, and set on the Mask all at once, who fixing his back against the wall, deliberately thrust his sword first into one, and then into another, till five of them lay stretched at his feet.

One of the survivors said—"Let me have the woman I found in the forest, who, according to our rule, belongs to me, and I ask no more."

Elvira looked at him, and recognised the man who dragged her from beneath the underwood.

"Touch her at your peril," replied the Mask.

"I will either have her or die," said the man; "but before I engage with you, I must tell you one thing, which is, that you are not unknown to me; and if you do not let me have my right,  
I will

I will tell these prisoners who you 'are."

The Mask spoke not, but buried his sword deep in the man's breast, who fell, saying — " May curses, great as thy strength is, light upon thee! I have life sufficient to tell your name, which is——" the name died upon his lips, and the man expired with it.

His comrades who were not slain offered to surrender, and the captain, with a large party, entering, who had not before known of the revolt, put the survivors in chains, ordering them to be confined still lower in the earth.

The Mask then turned his attention to the females, who from witnessing the scene of carnage before them, were more dead than alive, and with the assistance of the captain, he carried them into another apartment, while the dead bodies were removed.

Elvira, as soon as she was able, thanked the Mask for defending her in the  
singular

singular manner he had done ; Annette blessed him, with the natural fervour of her soul ; and Paulo said—" I hope, my son, you will not have to answer for the blood you have this day shed, as it was in a righteous cause !"

" It is immaterial to me whether I am to answer for it or not," replied the Mask, " for it will only make a small addition to that I have spilt before."

The priest crossed himself, lifting up his hands.

Some refreshments were brought in (which the captain had ordered) by an old woman, who might have sat for the picture of sin, whose grey hair sported on her dark neck, which resembled the colour of the Spanish nut, and whose only remaining eye scowled on whoever she looked. Her meagre form seemed bending with suffering more than age, her sharp sour features were indicative of the discontented soul that governed

them. She set down the refreshments, while every limb quivered with rage.

•“How now,” said the Mask; “these gusts of passion avail little here, which long experience must have taught you. Begone!”

The woman fixed her eye on him, and stood immovable.

The captain gave a shrill whistle, when the man who conducted Paulo into the cave entered.—“Oh ho!” he said to the woman, “you are in your airs, are you?” then taking her up in his arms, carried her out.

The captives knew not what inference to draw from this strange woman, but all were equally shocked at her appearance.

The captain filled a goblet, and drank destruction to all cowards. The Mask, filling another, presented it to Elvira, who was too much intimidated to refuse it. He did not drink himself, and when she seemed a little revived, he thus addressed

dressed her.—“ Lady, I will now explain my conduct, which to you may seem enveloped in mystery. From my having defended you at the hazard of my life, you may be led to suppose I love you. No such thing—I scorn so puerile a passion! nobler powers possess my soul, which I have dedicated to ambition and revenge! There is no height of greatness which I hesitate to climb—no obstacle that thwarts my progress I suffer to remain. The man who found you in the wood claimed you as his property, which interfered with my plans, and he fell, as did all those who espoused his cause. In me you will always find a defender, but not a ravisher.”

The captain arose, and shook the Mask by the hand. Elvira shrieked, and fell from her seat.

All present were concerned at her agitation, but none could account for it. The cause was, the captain smiled with acquiescence at the Mask, which smile



threw over his countenance the resemblance of features Elvira trembled to recall.

When she was a little composed, the Mask continued—"My intention respecting you and your friends is, that you shall remain here the rest of your lives."

"For life?" demanded Elvira.

"Such is my determination," answered the Mask; "and you must take the oath we usually administer on these occasions, which will prohibit you from making your escape (without my consent), even though an opportunity should offer, for death is the lot of those who attempt to fly this abode, as we spare neither age nor sex."

He then proceeded to administer the oath, which was too horrid to repeat; and Elvira remained silent.—"Do you trifle with me?" he vociferated, in a voice of thunder.

Elvira kneeled, and began to repeat  
the

the form, but the words were too dreadful for her utterance, and she paused.

The Mask drew his sword, pointed it at her left breast, and exclaimed, "Swear, or die!"

"I will die," replied Elvira.

Annette, screaming, threw herself between the Mask and her mistress, saying—"Swear, my dear donna, swear any thing that will save your precious life!"

Paulo arose, saying to Elvira—"Daughter, we are sometimes obliged to do those things, under peculiar circumstances, which we should recoil from at another time. I advise you to take the oath, and will tell you my reasons afterwards."

Elvira reluctantly swore what the Mask dictated. Paulo and Annette bound themselves by the same form.

"I shall not trouble you often with my company," said the Mask, "as I am never here but upon particular occasions.

sions, or when I want the assistance of the people connected with this establishment. Remember your oath !”

He left the cave, without making any further remark, followed by the captain. It is natural to suppose the three prisoners wearied themselves with conjecturing who the person was who wore the brazen mask ; but the more they tried to develope this strange character, the more they were puzzled, for if he was charmed with Elvira, why had he left her in that dreadful abode, and if he was indifferent to her, why had he defended her at the hazard of his life ? Supposing he cared not what became of her, he might have dispatched her at first, as no inquiry was likely to be made there. His whole conduct was inexplicable.

The ill-looking man before mentioned came, he said, by order of the Mask, to conduct Elvira and Annette to their bed-chamber, which was the cave where the scene of slaughter had so recently taken place,

place, a mattress being laid down in one corner of it. They passed a wakeful night, which was not caused from any fears of the dead, but from reflecting on the sort of people they were placed with, for it was the *living* who Elvira trembled at.

The rays of a rising sun had not drank the sparkling dew, ere the same old woman they had seen the evening before entered with two changes of clothes, which she presented to the prisoners without speaking.

Elvira availed herself of this opportunity, to ask if she knew the captain's name?

The woman shook her head.

Elvira asked if she could inform her who the person was who wore the brazen mask?

At the bare mention of him the respiration of the woman became short, her eye flashed fire, her hands were clenched, her limbs shook from the agitation

of her soul, her tottering frame fell, and she groaned with mental agony.

' Elvira and Annette raised her, soothed her feelings with the utmost compassion, begged her not to recall any unpleasant occurrences to her mind merely to satisfy their curiosity, promising not to mention the Brazen Mask again.

The woman started off the seat where they had placed her, ran frantically about the cave, gnashed her teeth, stamped, and darted off, but uttered not one word.

This mysterious woman's conduct created much alarm in the minds of the prisoners, who concluded she must either be a great sufferer by the Mask, or else completely deranged. Her silence to them was most unaccountable, for she seemed to understand the questions put to her by Elvira, but returned no answer.

Paulo joined them, and pitied the sufferings of this poor creature, but  
doubted

doubted not, if he could give her some idea of the Supreme Being, it would prove a sovereign balm for all her wounds: as the priest saw no good but in religion, nor no evil but the want of it.

Elvira asked him for his reasons, in desiring her the night before to take the horrid oath which the Mask administered?

“ They were these, my daughter,” Paulo replied: “ had you persisted in refusing, you would have been accessory to your own death, which I should have looked upon as a kind of suicide, though not inflicted by your own hand—nay, worse, you would have induced the wearer of the mask to have committed another murder, by plunging his sword into you, which so dreadful a character would not have hesitated to do. I do not look upon an oath as binding when extorted under such circumstances. Oaths ought only to be kept when they tend

to make us better Christians, and when they are made to God alone."

This manner of arguing in some measure relieved the mind of his audtress, who, though disgusted with her confinement, saw no way of escape. Had she remained with De Torza, she would have looked upon it as living in a state of adultery, which to the pure mind of Elvira would have been far worse than what she now endured.

Six terrible months elapsed, which brought no chance of liberty to our prisoners, who passed their time chiefly in Elvira's cave; were seldom noticed by the robbers, being committed to the care of Gondo, the man they had remarked for his murderous looks, and the strange woman, who during that time had not once spoken; which made the prisoners suppose that an oath had been extorted from her, to prevent her speaking again. Elvira kept her promise, in not mentioning the Brazen Mask, lest it

it should throw this wretched woman into the same agitation she had witnessed before; for however anxious Elvira might be to gain intelligence, she could not bring herself to do it at the expence of a fellow-creature.

The captain sometimes visited them, whose demeanour bespoke him of superior stamp to his followers, for there was a polished ease in his manner, a fascination not to be found in every one, joined to a handsome face and elegant person, which would have rendered him irresistible, had he been placed any where but at the head of a gang of robbers. He had rendered their confinement less irksome, by furnishing Elvira's apartment in a comfortable manner; yet our prisoners were not sunk into supineness; they did not want energy to effect their escape; but the regularity, order, and strong discipline of the robbers, rendered it impracticable, as there was a guard placed, night and day, at the top of the



steps which led down to their habitation.

The troop was one morning assembled earlier than usual, which occasioned some consternation to Elvira and companions, for they trembled at every thing they saw. The silent woman came as usual, to bring their change of clothes, which were always of the best quality, and was laying them down, when the Brazen Mask entered; her eye caught a glimpse of him, and she fell into hysterics. Elvira, with her usual compassion, attempted to administer relief; but the Mask exclaimed—"Desist! let her die!"

Elvira shrunk from his deep-toned voice, when the poor woman's fit grew stronger, and she was gasping for breath, with her mouth wide open; but compassion became greater than fear, and Elvira supported the sufferer, when she saw what she would have given worlds she had never seen—it was a sight that pierced the inmost recesses of her heart  
—that

—that filled her soul with horror—that almost deprived her of reason—and letting the sufferer fall, Elvira was in a situation, in some respects, little better. Annette flew to the assistance of her mistress, who covered her eyes with her hands, lest she should take a second look, for Elvira had seen into the mouth of the woman, but saw no *tongue*—it appeared to have been cut off at the roots.

The Mask went out of the cave, and Gondo, in a minnte's time, came to carry off the woman, as he had done aforetime.

Annette and her mistress were more terrified than ever at the hands they had fallen into, wondering they had not been treated with greater rigour, or served like the poor woman ; for Annette concluded it would be far better to lose her head than her tongue, which though a small member, is so highly prized by the ladies.

The

The Mask did not make his appearance again that day. Most of the troop were out on some particular occasion, and Gondo was gone with them. His absence from the robbers' cave was very unusual, as he never went out but when there was certain danger expected, which was the case now. His place was supplied by a man who had grown grey in the service of the robbers, but was of a more communicative turn than Gondo; and having comforted himself with a few horns of wine, he invited Paulo to share with him.

After some preliminary discourse, the priest asked him who the person was who always wore the brazen mask?

"The devil, I believe," answered Guerilla; "for though he has been connected with our gang for years, yet not one of them knows who he is, unless it is the captain, who is his own son."

"Is it possible?" asked Paulo.

"I will tell you," replied his informer.

"Many

“ Many years ago, in the middle of one stormy night, our sentinels were surprised by the appearance of a gigantic figure, in a large black cloak, with a plume of black feathers in his hat, and his face concealed by a brazen mask. He requested to speak with our captain who then headed the troops, and was as brave a fellow as ever run a man through the body. The captain went to inquire the stranger’s business, and in a few minutes conducted the Mask into the cave, bearing in his arms the lifeless form of a female. After long trial, we succeeded in restoring her to animation, and I think she was the prettiest little black-eyed Spanish wench I ever saw.

“ On finding where she was, Lcora, for that is her name, expressed her indignation, and insisted on being removed, which the Mask assured her she never should, for that it was his intention she should end her days there. Entreaties succeeded reproaches, but all were  
of

of no avail; and the Mask attempted to make her take an oath never to divulge who he was. This she resolutely refused to do, saying—‘ You are of all villains the basest! you left no art untried to effect my seduction, which was no sooner done, than you treated me with the most unparalleled hatred; and have brought me here to prevent me exposing you; but, contrary to your wish, I will try to live, and rear your yet unborn babe to curse its father.’—‘ That you shall not do,’ interrupted the Mask.—‘ I will,’ she continued; ‘ by all the powers of revenge, I swear that I will raise the infant now in my womb to sting thee like a scorpion, and lash its monstrous father through the world, till the infernal spirits shout approval of the deed!’

“ The Mask seized her, and holding a dagger to her breast, bade her swear what he directed.—‘ Never!’ said Leora.—‘ Swear!’ vociferated the Mask.—‘ I will

will not,' she replied; 'but will tell to all around who you are.'—'At your peril!' he observed.—'Robbers,' she said, addressing us, 'this monster is don——'

"The Mask threw her down, knelt upon her, and in a second cut out her tongue, swearing he would put it out of her power to tell who he was.

"The transaction was so sudden and so horrid, that accustomed as we were to scenes of blood, yet commiseration seized our hearts, stout as they were; and Gondo stopped the bleeding by applying a styptic. The poor creature was not insensible to an act of kindness, though administered by the hand of a robber, and from that moment has suffered Gondo to have more influence over her than any one else. Our captain said to the Mask—'Your conduct is unmanly; I had rather you had killed her at once, than what you have done.'—'I shall offer no excuse,' replied the Mask, for my actions are above the scrutiny of  
you

you or your followers. If you dare reveal any thing concerning me, you know your fate.'

"The captain, for the first time in his life, seemed awed; and afterwards informed us that we were all in the hands of the Brazen Mask, who was the owner of the forest in which our cave stood.

"The unfortunate Leora lived, for though loaded with affliction, she seemed to fight against death, and in three months after this dreadful night, was delivered of a fine boy. She was attended by an old woman, who was mother to one of our men, and got about again pretty well, but always seemed to grieve at the barbarity of the Brazen Mask; for the sight of him would throw her into such paroxysms of rage as almost bordered on madness.

"It is unnecessary to say, the emaciated woman you have seen here is the unfortunate Leora, for suffering, not age, has made her what she is; and constant

stant weeping has deprived her of the sight of one eye, which has helped to disfigure her amazingly. We hoped to gain some intelligence of the Brazen Mask, by desiring her to write his name, but were disappointed, for she did not know how to write, and by losing her tongue was deprived of all possibility of betraying him.

“ We nursed the boy amongst us, and were not a little proud of so fine a lad being born in the robbers’ cave. Leora could not fulfil her promised threat to the Mask, in rearing his child to curse him, as she was deprived of the power of instructing him in any thing; and what is singular, he has from his infancy been attached to the Brazen Mask, though I do not believe he ever once saw his face.

“ Our old captain died about two years ago, and Leora’s son, though young as he was, was elected in his stead; for we had taught him the use of arms, and trained him to our profession from his childhood.



childhood. He is possessed of coolness and intrepidity in the extreme, and a braver, nor a handsomer young fellow, cannot be found in all Spain. We do not rob and plunder now as we used to do, for whatever sums our young captain thinks necessary for the support of our fraternity, he only has occasion to mention to the Mask, and they are promptly supplied. Thus, you see, we are doubly tied to the father of our captain, and are more employed in private business for him than in plundering."

"Pray," asked Paulo, "by what name does your captain call his father?"

"He never speaks to him, nor of him, by any other title than the Brazen Mask," replied Guerilla.

Paulo was again disappointed, for he doubted not but the Mask was known by some appellation to the gang; and this extreme caution of concealing his name increased the uneasiness of the priest—when he suddenly thought he  
had

had found another clue to unravel the mystery, and asked by what name the captain was known?

“We never call him by any other appellation than captain,” replied Guerrilla, “but the Mask named him, when an infant, Regolio.”

Regolio was a name totally unknown to Paulo, whose anxiety was still left unsatisfied; and it was in vain he tormented himself with the question of who is he?

Paulo related to Elvira the information of Guerilla; and when he came to that part respecting the relationship between the Mask and the captain, every limb shook with apprehension, and she was still more confirmed in her suspicion, but it was nothing more than suspicion, for no certainty could be obtained concerning this inexplicable character. Elvira in some measure thought she could now account for the strange sensations she felt when in company with the captain,

he it was whom she had suspected the Mask to be.

Leora evinced great attachment to her new friends, who slackened not to finish the good work they had began, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing her wait with resignation for the moment when the fiat of Omnipotence should be given for her sufferings here to cease, and her felicity hereafter to begin.

Things remained thus, when the captain early one morning entered Elvira's cave, and, with his usual fascination, desired to speak with Annette in private. Her consternation was indescribable, for she trembled to grant his request, yet dared not refuse. Elvira, whose firmness was greater, asked him if his business with Annette was of such a nature as to preclude a third person from being present. The captain said it was; and Annette, bursting into tears, clung to her mistress.

“Do not fear me,” said Regolio;  
“think

“ think not I could harm the only maid I ever loved !”

“ Loved ?” asked Annette.

“ Yes,” he answered ; “ from the first moment I beheld you ; which is the reason you and your companions have been differently treated to what your fears at first foretold ; and it is out of tenderness to those fears I have now declared my sentiments in presence of your mistress. Let me hope that my suit will not be rejected, that——”

“ Hold !” said Annette ; “ there are cogent reasons which forbid you and I to form a union. You are illegitimate—so am I ; your father is a murderer—so is mine ; and shall we coalesce under these circumstances ?”

“ By my honour,” replied the captain, “ you are the only person living who should rate my father with impunity ! His great soul cannot bear the confines of the rank allotted him in life, for the

world itself seems too small for his eager grasp !”

“Annette stammered out an apology, fearing she had spoken more freely than prudence directed, and the captain, taking her hand, said—“ ’Tis I who am to blame ; ’tis I who should apologize ; but I thought the mind of Annette was equal to her person, and that she would not have scorned the son, for what she might see amiss in the father.”

“ Think not I scorn you,” rejoined Annette ; “ far, very far from that is the opinion I have formed of you.”

“ Then may I hope ?” asked the captain.

“ Banish the idea from your mind,” said Annette ; “ I never can consent.”

“ Perhaps your heart is already engaged ?” demanded Regolio.

“ No,” she replied ; “ I will be ingenuous, and own I never loved any one before I saw you.”

“ And

“ And it is plain you never loved me,” he said, with a deep sigh.

“ To what purpose is it, Regolio, that you extort the secret from me ?” Annette asked ; “ I would that we had never met !”

Regolio caught her hand, kissed it with fervour, swore he would not give up the hope that she would relent, entreated Elvira to intercede in his behalf, and bowing, left the cave.

The consternation of Annette and her mistress was great, though the latter had for some time suspected the truth ; but Paulo was the most surprised, and feared he foresaw danger either way ; for if Annette accepted the offers of the captain, she would be joined to a man leagued with banditti, and if she rejected them, there was little doubt but the lives of the three prisoners would be the forfeiture. Perplexity seemed to throw its mazy net around them, for act which way they would, certain destruction

stared them in the face. Thus circumstanced, their situation was by no means an enviable one.

Annette still was beautiful, for though the natural sprightliness of her nature fled at the recital of her mother's unfortunate end, it was succeeded by a soft melancholy, which gave an irresistible sweetness to her person, and her two friends wondered she had not before been addressed on the score of love by some of the robbers.

Elvira, whose magnanimity never forsook her, said to Annette—"Think not, my faithful girl, I could enjoy life, if prolonged at the expence of your felicity—no, that must not be. You shall refuse this captain, who has no power over our free souls, which will rejoice to be disencumbered of their tenements of clay."

"Hold, daughter!" said Paulo; "your sophistry is dangerous; remember, those who rush on their own destruction are  
guilty

guilty of suicide, though they may not lay violent hands upon themselves; yet if they take those steps which they foresee will produce death, the sin of self-murder will lie at their own door. I have loved you both as my own children—have for many years watched over your growing virtues, and thanked Heaven for the daily increase—surely you will not now give me cause to say I have laboured with you in vain? are my grey hairs to be brought to witness this?”

“ Oh, father,” answered Elvira, “ I feel and own the justness of your rebuke, but know not how we are to act.”

“ It is my advice,” replied Paulo, “ that the captain is accepted.”

Elvira started, and Annette still was silent. She was a prey to feelings which the good priest was a stranger to; for Annette had loved long before she understood the meaning of the passion, and there wanted but a declaration from Regolio to fan the spark into a flame.



Love is an involuntary passion, for we sometimes fix our affections on an object totally opposite to what prudence would dictate.

Thus it was with Annette, for Regolio was of all men upon earth the most unlike what she would have chosen for her husband. Annette was a Christian—Regolio was a deist; Annette was simplicity personified—Regolio was a bravo; Annette was a stranger to crime—Regolio had been instructed in nothing else; and yet Annette loved Regolio, and Regolio worshipped Annette.

She was struggling between the dictates of esteem and prudence, when Gondo, some few days after the above conversation, hastily informed Elvira that Leora seemed unusually ill; and in accents softer than he usually spoke in, entreated her to visit the sufferer. Elvira needed no solicitation, where she could alleviate the pangs of a fellow-mortal, and flew with eagerness to another compartment

partment of the cave where was Leora, supported by Guerilla. Her breathing was short, for respiration seemed obstructed by internal pain. Elvira felt her irregular pulse, moistened her parched lips, and chafed her beating temples; but all could not give relief to the patient, whose malady seemed rapidly to increase.

Elvira desired Paulo might be called, who immediately attended, followed by Annette; and after minutely examining the case, shook his head. He was a good physician, but had not those palliatives which the critical situation of Leora required. Such means as the cave afforded he administered, which in some degree alleviated the violence of her disorder.

Elvira and Annette put the patient to bed, seating themselves on each side it. Forlorn indeed would have been the situation of Leora, but for those two friends, who silently watched her during

a short slumber. Elvira thought she saw the finger of Providence, in being placed in the robbers' cave, and having been instrumental in giving Leora some idea of religion, who had ere this made her peace with Heaven, nor left the everlasting felicity of her soul to a death-bed repentance, which to the mind of Elvira was doubtful of being accepted.

Paulo gave it as his opinion, that the disorder of the patient was spasms in the stomach; but the sufferer had no tongue to tell her complaints—no voice to pour forth her sufferings into the bosoms of her friends—no power to articulate a sound indicative of what she felt; and they more bitterly than ever execrated the monster who had so cruelly deprived her of utterance.

Leora was aroused from her short slumber by a second paroxysm of her disorder, which seemed too powerful for her weak frame to stand; for Paulo saw that dissolution was drawing nigh, and  
when

when the attack had somewhat spent its violence, he said—" Daughter, if your hope rests in heaven, raise your hands."

She did so, clasping them with fervour, while a gleam of joy lighted up her countenance, and every feature beamed with delight. She shook hands with her three friends, but on taking hold of Annette's, she looked earnestly at her for some time, then cast her eyes wistfully round the cave. None present knew what she meant, but Elvira ran and fetched Gondo, who observing her for a minute, said he understood her, and hastily went out. Leora's end seemed fast approaching, and her friends watched each turn of her countenance with hopeless anxiety.

In about ten minutes Gondo returned, accompanied by the captain, who he found in the wood. At the sight of him Leora stretched out her arms, and burst into tears; for notwithstanding the neglect with which he had treated her,

Leora felt she was a mother. He knelt by the bedside, supported her with his left arm, while she sobbed out her feelings on his shoulder; when raising her languid head, she imprinted a kiss on his forehead; and placing the hand of Annette within his, gave them such a look as could not be misunderstood, then raising her eyes to heaven, closed them for ever on a world where she had experienced nought but sorrows of the bitterest kind.

Thus closed the life of Leora, whose share of affliction had been greater than falls to the lot of every one, and whose misfortunes were never obliterated from the minds of her friends.

Some minutes elapsed ere they perceived animation was extinct, so peacefully had her soul made its escape from its clay prison; and on the discovery their unfeigned grief was great indeed.

The captain seemed to awake from that indifference he had ever shewn  
his

his mother, and, now it was too late, called on her for forgiveness. In vain he shook the body—in vain he hoped to restore her to life—it was too late, the time was gone by when he might have shewn her some filial tenderness; and he would have given worlds to have brought back those years, during which he had treated her with cold neglect.

Possessed by feelings he before was a stranger to, he frantically tore his hair, and stamping, said—"He was his mother's murderer!"

Such must be the situation, such must be the reflections of those, who neglect to pay that filial attention to a parent, which nature, or their misfortunes, require.

Paulo silently led Regolio out of the cave, while Elvira and Annette had the sad office to perform of laying out the corpse of their lamented Leora. No sooner had they finished the melancholy

task, than Regolio rushed in, and threw himself on the body : he had broke from Paulo, who in vain tried to detain him, and who now thought it best to let his grief take its own course.

The illness and death of Leora had been so sudden, that two hours before she was alive and well, yet her friends now beheld her stretched out a corpse ; and Paulo gave it as his opinion that she had not strength to stand the violence of the disorder, from her frame being emaciated by years of suffering and affliction. Annette took the hand of the captain, entreating him to leave the body.

“ Touch me not, angel of sweetness !” he replied, “ lest I contaminate thy spotless mind, for now I too plainly feel myself unworthy of thee. Oh, how could I ever think that so much goodness as thee, would wed so much iniquity as I ! for I have murdered my poor, poor mother !”

Elvira

Elvira reasoned with him, while Annette soothed; at last prevailing on him to quit the cave of the now-inanimate Leora, and leaning on the arm of Annette, he entered the cave of Elvira. Paulo augured much good from the softened state of the captain's mind, not doubting but his reformation might be effected.

In so hot a climate as Spain, interment takes place very soon after dissolution, and finding the corpse began to change toward evening, Paulo mentioned the circumstance to the captain, asking where the body should be laid?

"I know not," replied Regolio, "being incapable of knowing any thing but that I am a villain."

"Leave the funeral to us," said Annette, earnestly.

"I will," answered the captain.

"I have a particular desire that our poor Leora should not be laid by any who have before died in this cave of iniquity,"



quity," said Annette; "but wish her to be interred in the wood, and give you my honour, that if you will allow us to see her dear remains laid there, we will not attempt an escape, but return with you to the cave."

"You cannot make a request which I would deny," answered Regolio; "all shall be as you wish."

Paulo arose, desiring to be attended by Guerilla and Gondo, that he might choose a spot for the grave.

"I will trust you alone, father," said the captain.

But Paulo thought it best to take some of the men with him, who were much surprised to find he was permitted to leave the cave; and the sentinel at the top refused to let him pass, till the captain appeared, and spoke to him. They did not go far, before Paulo fixed on the spot at the foot of a large tree, where, with a steady hand, he began to dig, the robbers offering to assist, which  
he

he refused, saying he had rather do it himself. The task took him longer than he at first expected, owing to his not being used to labour; and when he had finished, he took a knife out of his pocket, and carved on the tree this inscription—“ *Beneath the shade of this tree lie the remains of the unfortunate Leora.*” This done, he returned to the cave, where Elvira and Annette having wrapped the body in a sheet, for there were no means of procuring a coffin in their situation, all things were ready for the funeral.

It was now midnight, as Gondo and Guerilla laid the corpse upon a board, and placing it on their shoulders, began the procession. Regolio, with Annette, followed; Elvira, supported by Paulo, brought up the rear.

There was no funereal pomp here—no nodding plumes—no long train of relations—no deep toll of some convent bell, to smite the ear—no requiem, chanted

chanted by innumerable voices from monks and nuns, to heighten the appearance—no burning torches, to add to the pomp of the scene; but the silver moon shot her friendly beams through the foliage of the trees, and kindly lighted them on their silent way.

When arrived at the place, Paulo assisted in placing the body in its last home, the grave; then taking his station at the head, began the funeral service, which he could repeat from memory. He had not proceeded half through, when Gondo exclaimed—“If there *is* a God, may he have mercy on me!”

Conviction had for a moment seized on this hardened sinner, who could not witness unmoved the solemnity of this scene. Paulo finished the service, when a voice, which struck terror to the hearts of the three captives, vociferated—“Seize ’em—they are my prisoners!”

All

All turned to look, and beheld the Brazen Mask.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded.

“Behold!” said Paulo, lifting up part of the windingsheet, and pointing to the peaceful, pallid features of Leora.

“Ah!” exclaimed the Mask, “is it her?”

He seemed agitated, but no one could observe, whether his countenance underwent any change, for it was as usual shielded by his mask of brass, and a dead silence ensued. Then suddenly recovering himself, he said—“At last then I am rid of her!”

He turned away, when Paulo began to fill up the grave; and Gondo, with Guerilla, offering to assist, the captain said to them—“Forbear, your hands are stained with blood! it would be impious for you to touch even the mould which is to cover the remains of my unfortunate  
fortunate

fortunate mother—let the good priest alone do it.”

The Mask stood some paces from the grave, and beckoned to his son, who replied—“ I can hold no converse with you now : would to God I had loved my mother more, and my father less !”

The Mask walked to and fro in visible agitation.

Paulo having banked up the grave, Elvira and Annette bedewed it with the sincerest tears that were ever shed over fallen innocence. The Mask turned to them, saying—“ When will this mummery be over ?”

“ We have finished paying our last tribute of respect to the remains of the unfortunate Leora,” said Paulo ; “ and again acknowledge ourselves your prisoners.”

“ ’Tis well,” replied the Mask ; “ return from whence you came.”

The mourners took a last look at Leora’s resting-place, then silently retraced

traced their way to the cave, and when arrived there, separated for the night.

The Mask had closely followed them, and commanded Regolio to attend him, which Annette overhearing, determined to creep softly after, and know the subject of their conversation; but she was disappointed, for they went up the flight of steps into the wood, and she knew the sentinel would not let her pass alone.

Terrified and chagrined, she returned to Elvira's cave, and spent the time till morning in distracting herself about the safety of Regolio. Fancy painted to her imagination various scenes of murder, in all of which Regolio was the victim; nor did she conceal her fears from Elvira, who though she did not declare her sentiments, had small hopes of the captain's return. The hours seemed to Annette to have trebled their length, and she was saying to Elvira that this suspense was worse than death, when  
Regolio

Regolio entered, and inquired after their health.

His eye was sunk, his countenance bespoke an inward storm, and sighing, he seated himself by Annette. He remained silent for some minutes, then addressing her, said—"You will, I fear, deem this time improper, but particular reasons urge me to request an answer to the proposals I made you the other day."

She looked compassionately at him, but did not speak.

"Let me have your sentiments freely," said he.

"I am sorry to add disappointment to a heart already wounded," replied Annette, "but I cannot accept your offer."

"Glorious girl!" exclaimed Regolio; "you are a thousand times more deserving admiration than if you could. Too sensibly I feel that purity cannot join iniquity. But you will promise me one thing—you will give me your word never to marry another?"

"I will,

“ I will, faithfully,” answered Annette; “ you have my heart, Regolio; but prudence forbids me to give you my hand.”

He kissed that hand, saying—“ Would to Heaven I was worthy of you !”

“ Suppose,” said Elvira, “ you quit this way of life, captain?”

“ It is impossible,” he replied: “ I have plunged too deeply into the vortex of my father’s plans to retract; besides, if I was, could I expect that Annette would marry one who was bred a robber? I certainly was mad to make her the proposal! In desiring me to quit these irregular habits, you know not what you ask; it would be certain death to us all, for you know not the extent of my father’s power. His revenge is unequalled; and there is no corner of the globe could hide me from him, if I was inclined to make the trial, as I am too necessary to his plans for him to spare me, having solemnly sworn never to desert him.—

But,



But, let me ask, is there no boon which my much-admired Annette will condescend to request—can I give her no proof of the disinterestedness of my attachment?”

“ Yes, there is one,” she hesitatingly answered.

“ Name it ?” said Regolio.

“ It is our freedom,” replied Annette.

“ Your request is no small one,” observed the captain ; “ but, difficult as it may be to effect, it shall be granted.”

Elvira’s gratitude knew no bounds, and joy for a few moments restored to Annette a flash of her natural vivacity, who ran and fetched Paulo to share it with her.

Regolio took her hand, saying—“ I am glad it is in my power to give you this ray of pleasure ; for as I could not obtain you in my own way, believe me my regard is too sincere to wish you to inhabit any longer such an abode as this.”

“ Ten

“Ten thousand thanks!” said Annette; “but how are we to escape the Brazen Mask?”

“You cannot escape him,” answered Regolio; “nor can we take any steps without his concurrence.”

Annette grew serious, and he added—“Fear not—your wish shall be accomplished.”

Paulo looked steadfastly at him, and with tears in his eyes, said—“My son, I would to Heaven thou wert a Christian!”

“Old man,” replied the captain, “had your education been such as mine, perhaps you would have been what I am now.”

“True,” answered the priest; “but it is never too late to amend.”

“No more,” said Regolio; “you know not the oath by which I am bound.”

He kissed his hand to Annette, and hastily quitted the cave.

All three loved and pitied the youth,  
who

who seemed doomed to destruction ; and they unceasingly lamented the fate of one so gifted by nature, and with so much innate goodness ; though his character was not faultless, (for how could it be ?) on account of his indifference to his mother when she was alive ; yet now he was apparently an enemy to no one but himself. Annette secretly wished he had been a better man, for she loved him with sincerity, but she loved her religion more.

The captain did not make his appearance again that day, yet he waited on them the next morning, with the intelligence that he had obtained the consent of the Brazen Mask for their departure, though it was on certain conditions.

“ What are they ? ” asked Annette.

“ These,” replied Regolio ; “ you are to be conducted from this place blindfold—you are not to speak during the journey—and are to be conveyed to wherever he pleases.”

“ We

“ We had much better remain where we are,” Elvira observed ; “ for I think myself safer under the protection of captain Regolio than in the hands of the Brazen Mask.”

“ Cannot you set us free without the interference of that odious Mask ?” demanded Annette.

“ I *could* do so,” replied Regolio ; “ but my honour forbids, for I have sworn not to deceive him.”

“ You had better have sworn in a more righteous cause,” said Paulo.

“ Perhaps you are right,” answered Regolio ; “ but you will probably find our oaths are more strictly kept, than those made by the votaries of religion.”

Paulo felt the retort, for he had frequent opportunities of seeing religion used only as a mantle to cover the hypocrisy beneath it.

“ My visit must be short,” said the captain, “ being particularly engaged ; and as I shall be absent three weeks, I

shall not expect your answer to the conditions of my father till my return."

He tenderly took leave of Annette, saying—"I dare not trust myself often in your bewitching company, lest I should relapse into my former mad wish."

During the absence of the captain, our prisoners spent their time in debating whether they should or should not accept the conditions of the Brazen Mask. They frequently determined to consent, and as frequently rejected the idea. The three weeks expired, and found them still irresolute, when the captain returned for their answer. Elvira, whose courage had hitherto supported her, felt an unusual dread at being left entirely in the hands of so strange a character as the Mask; and yet to continue to live among bravoës, when she had liberty to leave, would appear strange indeed. The captain saw her distress, saying—"Believe me, the Mask will act more honourably than you suppose,

pose, and I shall accompany you to your place of destination."

"That assurance is enough," replied Elvira; "we agree to his proposals, for we cannot think ourselves in danger, if you are suffered to be near us."

The party immediately prepared for their departure, as they were directed, and at the hour of twelve the same night quitted the robbers' cave, where they had been two years and five months. Several of the braves were in attendance to escort them, being provided with three spare mules for the accommodation of the prisoners; but Annette begged to be allowed to walk to the grave of Leora, which was granted, and for which Regolio admired her the more. He desired the rest of the party to halt a little, while he accompanied her there; then placing himself on one side the grave, and Annette on the other, he took her hand, saying—"Swear to me, over the ashes of my unfortunate mother, that no one

shall possess your affections but myself."

"I swear!" replied Annette: "we never can be joined on earth, but we may meet in heaven."

"Enough," said Regolio; "with that assurance I must remain satisfied."

Elvira and Paulo by this time came up, and with Annette, took a melancholy leave of the little spot which contained the remains of their friend Leora; when Paulo advised Regolio, whenever he was about to commit a bad action, to go and look at his mother's grave, and that would prevent him.

The party walked about half a league, and were met by the Brazen Mask, who exclaimed—"How now, son! I thought the prisoners were to be blindfold."

"I did not deem it necessary to put the bandages before their eyes till we met you," answered the captain.

They were immediately placed on the mules, and submitting to be blindfolded,  
set

set forward on their journey, the mules of Elvira and Paulo being led by two of the robbers, and that of Annette by Regolio. They travelled several hours, and silence was uniformly observed, till Annette, forgetting the restriction, cried out—"Will our journey never be ended, captain?"

"Curses on that girl's tongue!" exclaimed the Mask; "we are discovered."

A shout on the opposite side, and a shrill whistle, indicated that some opponents were near. Our prisoners were placed in the rear, and a violent engagement ensued. The shrieks of the wounded, and the execrations of the defeated, were heard with the clashing of swords; when Annette, whose impatience could no longer be restrained, pulled the bandage from her eyes, and saw Regolio, who was bleeding fast, leaning against her mule. She instantly alighted, and stopped the effusion of blood with the handkerchief she held in



her hand, when he whispered—"Remember, let you be placed where you may, Regolio will free you."

He disappeared, and was lost in the confusion that reigned. Annette saw the people belonging to the captain were overpowered by numbers; and that those whose wounds would permit them, were making their escape; but she could nowhere discover the Brazen Mask.

The adverse party pressed on, and surrounded the three unfortunate prisoners; when Annette observed among them a tall figure, enveloped in a long black cloak, exactly resembling the person who had always worn the Brazen Mask; but this figure had neither mask nor hat on, both which it was probable he had lost in the fight. He had a ferocious aspect, a dark malignant eye, which scowled beneath a large bushy eyebrow; his nose was hooked—his beard full and black—his complexion sallow—his countenance such as would  
give

give the idea of a complete villain! He ordered the bandages to be taken off the eyes of Elvira and Paulo, who involuntarily started on beholding him. Paulo, on seeing the distress of Elvira, presented her to this strange person, saying—“The chance of capricious fortune has placed us in your hands, but suffer me to sue for lenity to this lady; for myself I care not, so that you will but treat her with the respect her virtues and misfortunes claim.”

“Pray,” asked the other, “who told you that Leolfo could treat a woman with any thing else than lenity and respect? Had your intercession been on your own account, I should have thought you right; for of all things ‘on earth, I hate a priest, and love a lady.”

He with much gallantry led the mule of Elvira, bidding his people conduct the other two, when she said—“Don Leolfo, fortune has made us your pri-

soners—perform one act of generosity becoming a conqueror, and set us free.”

“ If I had taken a lady who was either old or ugly, perhaps I might,” answered Leolfo; “ but as you, donna, possess neither of these disagreeables, depend on it I shall guard you with the same care as I do the apple of my eye.”

Paulo attempted to speak, when the conqueror exclaimed—“ Cease, old do-tard—think ye I shall hold parley with you ?”

He turned, and led the way, the rest following, and seemed to direct his course to a large castle, which frowned in the distance; when the situation of Elvira and her two unfortunate companions was more easy to imagine than describe; they gave themselves up for lost, being confident they were in the hands of the Brazen Mask, who now stood unveiled before them; and they were without even the protection of Re-golio,

golio, to restrain him from whatever excesses he might choose to commit. .

Annette now heartily repented not accepting the offers of the captain, who loved and honoured her; and though he was a bravo, was far superior to this monster, who, she began to think, was Satan in human shape. The glance of his eye had the same effect as the touch of the torpedo, for it numbed the faculties of those on whom it turned, for even Annette had not ventured to open her lips since she first gazed on him.

The whole party arrived in silence at the castle they had before seen, and entered a large hall, where Leolfo proceeded to examine the prisoners. He began with Elvira, by demanding her name, place of residence, and by what means she came into the hands of the robbers he rescued her from?

She replied—"You must excuse me from answering any questions; for I

consider you have no right either to detain or interrogate me."

"Whether I have the *right* or not, I leave you to find out," observed Leolfo; "but I will convince you that I have the *power* to break a haughty spirit, though it may be incased in as fair a form as your own."

The livid hue of his countenance became still more ghastly, and turning to Annette, he in a fierce tone said—"Who are *you*?"

She stared at him in silence, and he passionately repeated the question, which still remained unanswered, for to add to the terror of Annette, she was confident she heard the voice of the Brazen Mask, though he had always been so cautious as to speak in different tones, yet the one Leolfo addressed her in was certainly one which the Mask often spoke in.

Leolfo stamped, saying—"Speak, or I will, if possible, annihilate you!"

Annette

Annette still remained mute, when Leolfo said—"Is this little devil dumb?"

"She is," replied Paulo; "for your violent proceedings have made her so."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Leolfo; "dare to arraign my conduct, and I will isolate thee between two stone walls for life!"

He left the hall in a rage, giving his prisoners a few moments to console each other. They debated whether they should inform him or not who they were. Elvira thought it best not to satisfy him at present, in hopes he would shortly liberate them; and Annette, who always approved her mistress's opinion, determined to remain dumb; while Paulo was irresolute, not knowing how to advise, for the marked antipathy of Leolfo to him in particular was visible to all. The good man could do nothing more than offer up his prayers for their deliverance, being unconscious of having acted so as to deserve the hatred of their conqueror; but Leolfo had views on

Elvira from the first moment he saw her, which Paulo had not penetrated, and his anxiety about her filled the black heart of Leolfo with jealousy. He returned to the hall, followed by a train of attendants, commanding each of his prisoners to be confined separately.

Annette shrieked, saying—"If you have compassion in you, let me share the fate of my mistress, be it what it may, but do not separate us."

"Oh ho!" retorted Leolfo, "you have recovered your speech, have you? Ha, ha, ha! if I have not made a proud woman yield, I have made a dumb one speak, which is by far the greater miracle of the two."

Annette stood before him, the picture of embarrassment, for in spite of her determination, the idea of being torn from her beloved mistress made her forget she was dumb, and Leolfo heartily enjoyed her confusion.

"Be not uneasy on my account, my faithful

faithful girl," said Elvira; "there is an *eye* which pierces through the secret actions of this strange man, and will, in its own good time, spread them forth in open day."

"Away with them!" vociferated Leolfo; "shall I be insulted by those I can in a moment crush?"

The servants obeyed, leading off the prisoners, who were each the picture of despair. Annette and Paulo were conducted through a long corridor, terminated by a large flight of steps, which narrowed as they descended to the bottom, and led to many different cells; for the castle had, in former times, been inhabited by a set of devotees, who were attacked, and routed from their peaceful habitation, by the sanguinary Leolfo, who was for a short time one of their fraternity; but having gained over to his interest some spirits daring as himself, he put to the sword the more peaceful members of the community, who



who had amalgamated their small fortunes, agreeing to have all things in common.

Paulo was locked up first, and Annette in the cell next to him, which gave her secret pleasure. Each cell had a bundle of straw for a bed, a block of wood for a seat, and a ponderous chain fixed in the wall. The light was admitted through a small opening even with the ground, strongly secured by iron bars.

Paulo, as the door was being closed on him, looked with affection on Annette, saying—"My child, trust in God!"

"I will, father," she replied; "and know I shall not be disappointed."

They entered their new apartments without resistance, knowing it would be useless.

Elvira was differently treated, being led up the grand staircase, to a suit of rooms magnificent as the residence of an eastern monarch. Leolfo followed,  
and

and conducted her into an elegant saloon, which opened into a boudoir that led to a bedroom.—“ Here, lady,” said he, “ you may stop, and consider these apartments as your prison.”

“ It is no mean one,” Elvira replied ; “ but my servant, where is she ?”

“ Far out of your reach,” answered Leolfo ; “ do not suppose I intend you to have her for an accomplice, in effecting your escape. No, no, I am better acquainted with the fertility of women’s heads than to trust two of them together ! here you remain alone till you have completed my wishes.”

“ Pray what are those wishes ?” Elvira eagerly asked. •

“ Does not my conduct prove ?” said Leolfo ; “ must I speak them in plain terms ? does not my every action tell that I love you to adoration ?”

“ Me ! love me !” demanded Elvira ; “ oh, recall that detestable sentence, and swear you hate me ! am I so wretched  
ed

ed as to live to be loved by that monster known only by the title of the Brazen Mask? This is too horrid—there is madness in the thought! Leave me, monster—leave me!”

She fell into a strong fit, the first she ever had in her life, which alarmed the hitherto-undaunted Leolfo, who had no hopes of her recovery, though he summoned many of his people to assist in her restoration. Her fit was long and violent; for when it did subside, it left her in too weak a state to speak. She was put to bed, attended by an old woman, the only one of the females who belonged to the castle who was admitted into the presence of their master; for, till capricious fate had thrown Elyira in his way, Leolfo had been a woman-hater. She remained some time in a languid state, very slowly gaining a small portion of strength, when he ventured into her apartment, quietly seated himself by her bedside, not venturing  
to

to speak, lest she should know his voice. But his precaution was useless; for he had not sat many minutes before she perceived him through the curtain (as the heat is so great in Spain, that their bed-hangings generally consist of gauze), and shrieking, fell into a second fit.

Leolfo now began to think his wishes would never be crowned with success, and determined not to see her again till her health was more firmly established.

Many weeks passed ere she was able to leave her couch, when he requested her to admit him, saying the old woman should be present during his visit. This Elvira agreed to, knowing he could see her whenever he pleased, without her consent, and thought it best not to irritate him by a refusal.

He shortly after entered, saying—  
“Do not let my presence alarm you, donna; but I wish to know whom you alluded to in our last conversation, when  
you

you mentioned something about a mask?"

"Who should I mean but yourself?" asked Elvira.

"*Me!* do you intend to say that I am a mask?" he demanded.

"No," she answered; "but you are the wearer of one: you have for many years worn a *brazen mask*."

Leolfo smiled, saying—"I never had such a disguise on in my life; you are most assuredly mistaken in your man."

"No," Elvira replied, "I am positive of being right. It was you who found me in the wood, it was you who ordered me to be confined above two years in the robbers' cave, it was you who heaped unheard-of barbarity on the unfortunate Leora, it was you who consented for me to leave that abode, and then made a mock fight, on purpose to overcome Regolio, that you might have me more completely in your power."

"As far as these accusations respect me,

me, they are false, on my honour!" he gravely answered.

"*Honour!*" repeated Elvira; "name it not, Leolfo—you are an utter stranger to it; or, if you have the least atom of it in your breast, keep out of my sight."

"For the present I will," he observed, "as the precarious state of your health entitles you to some indulgence; but I must speak to you again shortly." He politely took his leave.

Elvira was what might be termed a peerless beauty; she had a fine majestic form, a piercing eye, a regular set of features, two rows of teeth like ivory, and a commanding demeanour, which would have awed the most determined villain, except the one whose hands she had fallen into. But we will leave her for the present, and watch the interesting Annette.

Regolio had been wounded in the rencontre with Leolfo's people, but he had

had received the wound in shielding Annette, and it was her hands which had bound it up. Neither persuasions or remonstrances from the bravoës, who were sincerely attached to him, could induce him to have the handkerchief removed, for it was Annette who had placed it there, and he was confident there was some hidden charm in it, known only to himself, which would effect a cure, such was the strength of his attachment. Whether the bandage did contain the spell alluded to, or whether it was owing to his natural good constitution, is matter of doubt; but true it is, the pain of the wound in a few days abated, and Regolio was enabled to search for his lost treasure.

He hastened to the castle of Leolfo in the dead of the night (for some of the robbers had watched where the conqueror had conducted his captives), which Regolio surveyed again and again, but could discover no clue to aid his search.

He

He repeated his nocturnal visits many times, and on the point of concluding she could not be there, when he heard his name softly whispered close to him, but could not discover any one. His name was again repeated, and the cloak in which he had wrapped himself was gently pulled.—“In the name of courage, who are you?” he demanded in a low tone.

“It is I,” answered Annette.

“My angel!” he exclaimed.

“My Regolio!” involuntarily burst from her.

Chance had led him to the spot where Annette was confined, where he stood, close to the iron-work of her cell, which was even with the ground, musing how to proceed, when she perceived him, by the beams of an unclouded moon, and putting her arm through the bars, plucked his cloak, calling him by name.

“Have I at last found you?” he said;

“now



“ now I shall be able to keep my word, and give you liberty.”

“ I have almost freed myself,” Annette observed; “ for the invention of a Frenchwoman is seldom dormant when necessity requires its aid. These bars are much eaten with rust, and I have worked at one of them every night with a large nail which I found in my cell, and have almost cut it through at the top and the bottom.”

Regolio took hold of the bar, in an instant wrenched it asunder, and clasped her in his arms.

When the tumult of their feelings was a little subsided, Annette shewed him the cell where Paulo was confined, who they with difficulty awoke from a sound sleep, as they dared not make much noise. He thanked Heaven for its interference, saying—“ I was confident Providence, in his own good time, would set us free.”

Regolio promised to bring him a file  
the

the following night, to cut away the bars which confined the priest, and proposed Annette should immediately escape with *him*.

“Not so,” she replied; “though I have the highest opinion of your honour, yet, under the circumstances which exist between you and I, prudence forbids me to accompany you without the presence of my dear mistress, whom neither life nor death shall tempt me to forsake.”

He pleaded with all that fascinating energy so natural to him, and Annette resolutely refusing, crept back into her cell, replacing the bar which had been removed. Regolio’s heart misgave him as he saw her return into her solitary habitation; but finding entreaty vain, promised to be with her the following night.

Annette’s spirits now felt light, for she found she was at liberty to search for her beloved mistress; and availing herself

herself of her freedom, sallied forth as soon as Regolio was out of sight. She traversed the building round and round, but could not discover a light in any of the windows, nor hear the least noise; and having staid out till morning burst from the east, returned disappointed to her cell.

Regolio kept his promise, and brought the file, with other implements, for Paulo to obtain his liberty, who immediately set to work, but found it necessary to remove two bars, not having so sylph-like a form as Annette, who could creep out when one was taken from her cell.

Regolio, as might be supposed, used every argument he was master of to persuade her to leave, which she would not consent to till she had discovered Elvira, but permitted him to repair to the grating of her cell every evening. She nightly surveyed the castle, with as little success as at first; but disappointment

ment tended to increase her resolution, and determined her not to give up the point.

Annette had frequently tried to gain an entrance into the castle to no purpose, for the door was securely fastened, and a porter slept in the hall within. Perplexity had entangled her steps, as she, sighing, cast her supplicating eyes to heaven, when she discerned a window partly open. Her sudden joy was a little damped by the difficulty of reaching it; but perceiving a green cord hang on one side, she eagerly sprang at it, and catching hold of it, down dropped a flight of green steps, which were made to let down at pleasure, and when drawn up, formed a kind of sun-blind to the window. She was not long in ascending, and drawing up the steps after her, stopped in the room, to return thanks to the rescuer of oppressed innocence, for this unhopèd-for discovery.

Her tremour was too great to let her  
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proceed for some minutes, and taking a survey of the apartment, supposed it to be Leolfo's breakfast-room. The tumultuous joy she was thrown into having a little subsided, she gently opened the door, and found it led into a large corridor, which she traversed with light steps and a beating heart.

Annette perceived several apartments opened into this gallery, but knew not which to enter, till resolution overcoming fear, she opened one, and found it a large saloon, then tried another, which was a small library; she attempted a third, but found her steps arrested by the heavy breathing of some person asleep.—“Heaven grant,” said she to herself, “that this may be my beloved mistress!”

She stepped softly towards the bed, the room being totally dark; and, unfortunately, threw down a flower-stand, which aroused the sleeper, who called out—“Who's there?”

It was the well-known voice of—Leolfo!  
The

The terror of Annette cannot be described, when Leolfo, starting out of bed, took his sword, and rushed out of the apartment. He stalked along the corridor, down the grand staircase, to awaken the porter, while Annette, seizing the opportunity of the moment, made the best of her way to the breakfast-room, yet trembled too much to be capable of letting down the steps; but, as there was no time to lose, she sprang out of another window, and though the height was considerable, alighted unhurt. She flew to her cell, where throwing herself on her straw bed, she burst into a flood of tears.

Malicious fortune had seemed to follow her and her mistress through the world, and it was in vain for the casuist to ask why two such faultless creatures, who sought the good of all they were concerned with, were so persecuted from their childhood. The ways of Providence are right, however strange they

may appear to our finite capacities, and we have not any thing left us to do but to bow submission to his will.

Annette dared not venture to continue her search the following night, lest the inmates of the castle should be on the alert, but went to the cell of Paulo, to whom she communicated, in a whisper, the narrow escape she made out of the apartment of Leolfo.

“ My child,” said the priest, “ be not alarmed for your mistress ; for the same eye which compassionates the fall of a sparrow will in pity watch over her. Slacken not your exertions, for we are sometimes expected to use activity to extricate ourselves out of difficulties, and supineness would ill become beings gifted with faculties like us.”

The resolution of Annette was not abated, though Regolio, who kept his appointment every evening at dusk, tried to shake it. On the fourth night after the rencontre with Leolfo, she entered

tered the castle, by means of her favourite flight of steps, and turning to the left, instead of the right, avoided his chamber; proceeding to the extremity of the corridor, she heard footsteps following, and concealing herself behind a large bust, beheld Leolfo approaching, with a lamp in one hand, and a dagger in the other.—“ Yes,” he muttered to himself, “ this night she shall either yield or die !”

Annette easily conjectured who it was of whom he spoke, and stopping her breath while he passed, saw him draw the ponderous bolts of a door opposite where she stood. He entered, when Annette softly followed him, through that room into a second, and then into a third. He placed the lamp on the table, and Annette, supposing it to be her mistress’s chamber, waited till his back was turned, then blew it out, as he was approaching the bed.—“ Curse



the lamp!" he exclaimed, "how soon it is extinguished!"

Annette sprang on him, seizing him by the back of the neck, and struck the dagger out of his hand.—"Confusion!" he cried out, "is the devil in this room? There is treachery here; some of my villanous attendants have supplanted me!—Who are you?—Speak!"

Elvira suddenly awoke, shrieking—"It is Leolfo's voice!—Villain, what do you want here?"

"I would soon let you know if the coast was clear," he answered; "but as there is more company present than I invited, I shall convey you to a place of safety."

He took her in his arms, for she had only thrown herself on the couch with her clothes on, and notwithstanding Elvira made all the resistance her strength would allow, carried her into the outer apartment. Annette had picked up the dagger,

dagger, and followed close; but not knowing what would be done with her mistress, made one desperate effort, and plunged it into Leolfo, who let go his hold, and, cursing, fell at her feet.

Annette took the hand of Elvira, and led her out of the saloon, not forgetting to bolt the door on the outside, to prevent Leolfo following, should he recover.

Elvira said—"Who, in the name of Heaven, are you?"

Annette did not answer, but hurried her on to the breakfast-room, then letting down the steps, assisted her to descend. It was now, by the light of the moon, that Elvira recognised her faithful French girl, who, putting her finger on her lips to denote silence, ran up the steps again, drew them after her to avoid suspicion, and leaped out of the other window. She led her mistress, without speaking, to her cell, where they embraced with the sincerest affection human nature was capable of.

The first care of Annette was to conceal her mistress. After much deliberation, she persuaded her to lie down, and covered her with the straw which formed her bed. At daybreak two of Leolfo's people unlocked Paulo's cell, and looked in, then immediately opened Annette's, and looked in, but did not speak; their chief object seemed to be to ascertain that their prisoners were there.

Our persecuted trio were greatly alarmed, thought it advisable to make their escape with all possible speed, and not wait till evening for Regolio, which was their first intention, lest a more minute search should be made; for there was no doubt but the situation of Leolfo and the flight of Elvira were discovered.

They quitted their cells, replacing the iron bars, and Paulo, supporting each, resembled Time, with Spring on one arm, and Summer on the other. The domains of Leolfo were skirted by a  
wood;

wood, to which they directed their course, in hopes of securing themselves from observation till the shades of evening drew on, when Regolio would pass that way to the cell of Annette. They gained the wished-for spot unnoticed, and were congratulating each other on their good fortune, when a hand grasped Elvira, and a voice said—"Have I found you, lady?"

She turned, and saw herself in the hands of the Brazen Mask! Elvira shrieked, saying—"Am I again so unfortunate as to be within your grasp? Oh, mysterious monster, for Heaven's sake let me go! you have no right to detain me, no legal power to impede my way; I am nothing to you, of no more consequence than the fallen leaves beneath our feet: let me go, and I will pray that the exhaustless mercy of that God against whom you have so long rebelled, may pardon all your crimes!"

She sunk, fainting, into the arms of

Annette, while the Mask stood motionless before her. A large party of Spanish police, with an alguazil at their head, issued from among the underwood, when the Mask, being the first who perceived them, exclaimed—"Ha!" and darting further into the wood, was lost in its deep shades. The party, who had not observed him, passed on without molesting our three fugitives, and Elvira opening her eyes, saw only her two friends, who strove to comfort her, though they were bereft of all hope themselves.

Paulo proposed that they should endeavour to reach the convent to which he formerly belonged, where, if the old abbot was alive, they were sure of an asylum, instead of waiting all day in the wood for Regolio, fearing the Mask should again make his appearance, and carry his intentions, whatever they might be, into effect. His companions assented to Paulo's proposition, and being  
a little

a little recovered from the terror they were thrown into by meeting with the Mask, quickened their pace, supported only by the hope of reaching the wished-for haven.

Elvira was deeply musing; she stopped suddenly, and thus addressed her friends—"My beloved father Paulo—my faithful Annette, here we must part—here we will bid adieu, till we meet again on the celestial shores; for I will no longer enthrall the only friends I have on earth, as my evil destiny still pursues me, and plunges you into innumerable difficulties on my account: leave me to the rigour of my fate, and then I alone shall suffer."

"Cease, my daughter—cease that melancholy strain," said Paulo, "and endeavour to regain that strength of mind you have so eminently possessed; nor think you can tempt me to offend Heaven so far as to leave you, when my presence may prove your protection."

Annette, bursting into tears, sobbed out—"I will die first!"

Elvira, holding the affectionate girl to her heart, said, she could not be completely wretched while Heaven had given her two such friends.

They started at hearing the trampling of mules, and in the same instant a voice vociferated—"There they are, seize 'em!"

The voice struck terror to their hearts, for it was Leolfo's. His people immediately surrounded them, while they stood the victims of despair.—  
"Now you are mine, donna—mine for life!" exultingly exclaimed Leolfo.

"Vain man," replied Elvira, "yours I never can, nor ever will be!"

"Whether you cannot, or will not, is immaterial to me," said Leolfo; "but I am determined we will never part again, therefore mount, and return."

"Never," answered Elvira—"never will I tamely put myself in your power!"

"Then

"Then I must compel you," Leolfo replied.

He threw open his long black cloak, laid hold on her with his right hand, his left arm being in a sling.—"I was wounded," he continued, "last night, by an unknown hand; but fortunately the dagger pierced my arm only."

He ordered his men to place her on a mule, when she said—"For Heaven's sake desist, Leolfo—I never can be yours, for I am the wife of De Torza."

"De Torza!" exclaimed Leolfo; "are you De Torza's wife?"

"I am," she observed; "and nothing but the hope of getting free from you could wring the secret from me."

"Enough," he exclaimed; "I will be revenged."

He ordered his men to put a bandage before the eyes of the lady. Paulo advanced, and addressing Leolfo, said—"Young man——"

"Old man," interrupted Leolfo.

"Hear



“Hear me,” said Paulo.

“Be silent!” exclaimed Leolfo.

He commanded his people to blindfold the three prisoners, which being done, they were placed on mules, and conducted they knew not where.

After journeying some time, they perceived, by the searching rays of the sun, that they had quitted the shade of the forest, which had been a fatal spot to Elvira, though she knew it not to be the same wood, as they were conducted into it from the robbers’ cave blindfold. It was in that forest she first encountered the Brazen Mask—it was there she was first taken by Leolfo—there it was that the Mask found her, as she was fleeing from Leolfo—and it was there that Leolfo got her into his possession a second time. The wood was of great extent, and took some hours to travel through it.

The heat of the sun became insupportable, particularly to our three unfortunate

fortunate prisoners, who had not tasted food that day; when Leolfo ordered his men to return to the skirts of the forest, where he waited till the heat was less rigorous. He sent some of his men in quest of refreshments, which they having procured, Elvira partook of a small quantity of wine; and as Leolfo took the bandage off her eyes for a few minutes, he looked at her with a malicious smile, which she could not understand. The coolness of an evening breeze induced him to continue his journey for about two hours longer, when the party halted, and a horn was sounded. Some one answered the summons, when Leolfo asked if the owner of the castle was within?

The answer was in the affirmative.

“Tell him that Leolfo craves an interview with him,” said he.

The messenger returned, desiring Leolfo and his train to enter.

It is necessary to observe, that the  
three

three prisoners were hid from the scrutinizing eye, by being covered with three great cloaks, before they arrived at this castle. They were conducted into a large hall, where the master of the castle received them very courteously, and Leolfo, taking the hand of Elvira, thus addressed him—"My friend, I have received many singular services from you, for which I will try to make a compensation, by giving you, as a present, this lady."

The cloak was dropped, the bandage was taken off her eyes, when she found herself in the arms of—De Torza!

Amazement kept her dumb, for the desolated heart of Elvira now sunk within her, as she fainting hung on the arm of her husband.

Annette's eyes were permitted the use of sight, who immediately fixed them on Murdico, and she shrieking ran and fell at the feet of her mistress.

Paulo expressed astonishment, but was  
the .

the only one of the three who was not bereft of reason. He endeavoured to argue Annette into calmness, while De Torza stood silently contemplating the features of the inanimate Elvira, whom he yet held in his arms.

Annette seemed incapable of bearing her fate with patience, and turning to Leolfo, said — “ Oh that I had struck to thy malicious heart, instead of wounding merely thine arm ! for it was I who gave the blow last night ; but if circumstances should again permit, depend upon it I will aim more surely.”

This she said from the excess of her feelings at the moment, for no heart could be more free from premeditated evil than hers was.

“ Thank you !” replied Leolfo ; “ and if chance should again throw you in my way, I will not fail to return your compliment.”

As he spoke his pale countenance became paler still.

“ If

“If I may advise,” said Paulo, addressing De Torza, “let the lady Elvira be conveyed to an apartment, and left to the charge of Annette; for in she recovers, and finds herself in your custody, she may probably relapse.”

De Torza adopted this proposal, and relinquished her to the care of Paulo and Annette, who carried her into another room. It was long ere she opened her eyes, and Annette's anxiety increased, fearing this stroke of fate would prove her last. Paulo found it necessary to open a vein in Elvira's arm, which restored her to herself, when De Torza sent word he should not break in upon her retirement, till she could assure him she was able to bear his presence. This consideration tended greatly to relieve her, for De Torza seemed inclined to act with more lenity than she could expect.

How long Leolfo staid, Elvira and her two friends did not know, nor did they care, so that he was but gone, for they  
equally

equally dreaded and detested him, as his resemblance to the figure of the Brazen Mask left no doubt on their minds that they were one and the same person; for there was but one argument in favour of his *not* being the Brazen Mask, which was, that he appeared many years younger than they supposed the Mask to be, unless he began his career at an early age.

Though De Torza had behaved with more decorum than Elvira hoped for, yet she was miserable at being in his power; for her strong sense of virtue still whispered, that she would be leading a life of adultery if she resided with him while his first wife was living. She put off an interview with him, from day to day, till De Torza begged she would see him for a few minutes, as he had something of consequence to communicate.

The request was reluctantly granted, and he stood before her, with the same  
fine

fine figure, the same dark, penetrating eye, the same handsome features, as usual. Elvira, as she silently surveyed him, thought she had nowhere seen his equal.

“ I come,” said De Torza, “ to assure my wife Elvira, that she has now no rival.”

“ Wife !” said Elvira ; “ oh, do not mock me by calling me your wife, for there is another who has a prior claim to that title.”

“ No such thing,” he answered ; “ the lady I first married has been long dead.”

“ De Torza,” observed Elvira, “ do not think again to deceive me.”

“ Convince yourself,” he replied ; “ let your friend Paulo go to Madrid, where my first wife lies buried, and make what inquiries you think proper. Should you then be satisfied on this subject, I shall expect a reconciliation will take place ; for you are now my only and my lawful wife ; and, after all, what have I done  
but

but loved you too well? If I repented my first marriage, it was through love for you—if I united myself to you clandestinely, it was through fear of losing you.”

He extended his hand, which Elvira bathed with her tears. He saw her weakness—urged his plea more strongly—Elvira was a woman, and yielded once more!

Amiable sex! whose very weaknesses are sometimes virtues, or how would guilty man so oft get pardoned?

After some further conversation, it was agreed De Torza should send for the certificate of his first wife's funeral, for his offering to let Paulo go convinced Elvira he did not intend to deceive her. He withdrew, exulting in his success.

Elvira was assured De Torza loved her, and wrapping herself in the fond delirium, hourly regained her health. Annette was delighted to see her mistress



tress happy; and Paulo returned thanks for the unlooked-for termination of their misfortunes, but was unable to go to Madrid on account of indisposition, and Elvira fixed on one of De Torza's servants to go in his stead. In due time the messenger arrived, with the authenticity of the interment of De Torza's first wife, accompanied by the corpse, which had been taken from the vault at Madrid, and brought to the castle at Toledo, by De Torza's particular desire, to be placed in the family vault; but he thought it necessary to make some erasures of names, before he presented the papers to Elvira, who perused them, and owned she was satisfied.

The consequence of this reconciliation was the birth of the bewitching Adela. De Torza, ere this event took place, had one wish left ungratified—he hoped that Heaven would bestow on him a son; and when Annette flew to him with the intelligence that Elvira's life was spared,  
and

and she had blessed him with a daughter, he showered curses on its innocent head, and vowed never to see it.

The hapless mother plainly saw he had no love for her or her infant; but reflecting she was his legal wife, determined never more to leave him, and to fulfil her duty in the minutest sense of the word, though he broke through every tie, moral and religious.

Annette nursed the child, Paulo prayed for, and Elvira wept over it. When Paulo waited on De Torza, to know in what name he should baptize the infant, he replied—"Let it have a name I never heard before."

Elvira, in obedience, called it Adela.

Twelve months passed ere the unnatural father of the beauteous Adela beheld her, and then it was owing to a stratagem of Annette's, who leaned out of a room window above that where De Torza was sitting, and holding the child by the clothes, shrieked loudly for assistance.

ance. De Torza saw its perilous situation, when throwing open his own window, caught the infant in his arms ; and then it was that the father's first kiss was imprinted on its smiling lip ; for, spite of his resolution, the extreme loveliness of the child effected what all the entreaties of Elvira, and the reasoning of Paulo, could not. He contemplated its features some minutes, while the little cherub entangled its fingers in his hair, then hastening to the anxious mother—“ Here, Elvira,” said he, “ take this child, and rear it as the daughter of De Torza ; and remember, I hereafter acknowledge her as my own.”

“ You *do* ?” exclaimed Elvira ; “ is my child so blest as to have a father who will own her ?”

“ No more of this,” he replied ; “ I have told you my mind, for the little witch has conquered me so far, as to make me break through my resolution. I did not suppose you could have given birth

birth to any thing so handsome ; but her strong resemblance to her father may in some degree account for it," he added, with a smile.

It was true that the likeness between Adela and her father was so great, that had he persisted in disowning her, one glance was sufficient to convince the most superficial observer of the parental and filial tie between them.

This was the first visit De Torza had condescended to make Elvira since her *accouchement*, who was happy once more, for she buried all her grievances in the fond thought that he was the acknowledged father of her little Adela. After this, he sometimes visited Elvira, who felt grateful, for he then caressed her child ; and when it could run and entwine its arms around his legs, Elvira thought she could perceive the father glisten in his eye ; but pride may frequently put on the semblance of affection. Whether it was so or not, the

mother of Adela could not discern ; but she took especial care that the first word her infant could articulate was—father.

To Annette it was Elvira owed her present happiness ; for it was Annette who thought of dropping the infant, from an upper window, into the arms of its obstinate father ; and it was Annette who had shared all her misfortunes, from the age of fourteen to the present moment. No example of friendship in the other sex could outdo this, for this attached servant had followed her mistress for years, without any other reward than the joy of lessening her sufferings.

It may naturally be supposed they frequently talked of Regolio, of whom no tidings had been heard ; and De Torza would sometimes so far relax from his accustomed austerity, as to converse with them of the various mischances which befell them during their absence from the castle. Among other characters, he was much amused with the Brazen  
Mask,

Mask, and frequently said, he would give half his possessions to become acquainted with so singular a personage.

Murdico staggered into the room one day, half intoxicated, saying—"You may take the word of a drunken man, that the Brazen Mask is no more the person of Leolfo than I am."

"Who then is the Mask?" asked Annette.

"He is—he is—no other than himself!" stammered out Murdico.

Each smiled at the elucidation, and each asked the other if Murdico was the person; but no, that was impossible, and the character was again fixed on Leolfo, for Murdico was low of stature.

Annette always slept in her mistress's room, and dreamed one night that the Mask stood by her bedside, supporting the loved form of her Regolio. She shrieked in her sleep, and, waking, fixed her eyes on the two objects in her dream. Her screams were redoubled, which

awoke Elvira, who, starting up, beheld the Brazen Mask and Regolio in her chamber. . Horror struck, she called on De Torza to protect her ; but the Mask waved his hand, and, with Regolio, glided out of sight. Which way they made their escape, never could be ascertained. It took some hours to calm the perturbation of Elvira and Annette, who were at a loss to account for the entrance or disappearance of the Mask and Regolio in their chamber ; but that each had seen them, the other could testify. De Torza persisted, that whatever they had seen, was the effect of fancy, and scoffed at their credulity in thinking otherwise.

Affairs rolled on calmly for near three years, when a stranger made his appearance at the castle, introduced by De Torza as his son, and was no other than Orlando, the first person who is mentioned in this work.

De Torza paid Elvira an early visit  
one

one morning, telling her he was going a journey to fetch home his son.

“ Son !” said Elvira, “ have you one ?”

“ I have,” he replied, “ and shall expect he will receive from you the attention of a mother.” He said no more, abruptly leaving her.

Elvira clasped her Adela, fearing she would find in this boy a rival in the affection of her father ; but who this son could be, she was at a loss to determine ; whether he was the son of De Torza’s first wife, or the child of some unfortunate woman whom he had seduced ; or whether he was her own son, who she had been made to believe died shortly after its birth, she could not conjecture ; yet this last thought seemed improbable, for she wept over her infant many hours after its decease, or at least after its apparent death.

She anxiously waited the return of De Torza, who was absent about a fortnight, and brought with him this expected



pected guest; but all were astonished at the hatred of the child to its father, though this might be occasioned by being brought up by strangers.

De Torza tried to conquer the child's antipathy, before he let Elvira see him, which he found impossible. Paulo had studied the human heart, and averred, the mild affection of a female, who was looked up to as a mother, would subdue the most obdurate among the human race.

De Torza, as a last resource, tried the experiment, and led his son to the apartment of Elvira, where they saw the beauteous Adela dancing to the notes of her mother's guitar. Elvira was startled at seeing the youth so unexpectedly; but when De Torza introduced him by the name of *Orlando*, her feelings were too strong for concealment, and she entreated him to tell her if this was indeed her own Orlando.

To this question he refused giving a  
satisfactory

satisfactory answer, and Elvira was left in uncertainty ; yet the age of the boy certainly corresponded with the birth of her son.

Orlando was a fine handsome youth, though he did not much resemble De Torza or Elvira. His open countenance plainly indicated his ingenuous heart, for candour was his ruling passion, which he frequently, for his own sake, carried too far. In his childhood he spurned deceit as he would a serpent.

Elvira hoped he might be her own, for she doated on him enthusiastically, from the first moment she clasped him to her breast. When he kneeled, and asked her if she would love Orlando, all the mother rose within her, and banished every doubt. She could not fathom De Torza's reasons for concealing this child so long from her, for he was a strange man, who confided in no one.

Elvira had remained a prisoner in that wing of the castle, ever since the

birth of Adela; and De Torza had informed her it was his intention she should never quit it. She pined not at confinement, so that she was indulged with the care of her child, for she had hitherto lived for the sake of Adela alone.

The delight Orlando took in cultivating this opening blossom, would have bound Elvira to him, even if she had been confident he had no claims of consanguinity towards her."

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Here the document Elvira had put into the hands of Orlando, being the same he had given the hermit to read, closed; but, to clear up some points, it may be necessary to continue the information.

Affection increased with the years of Elvira's children, and ripened into madness. Orlando was the first who felt, and the first who owned it. He confided

ded to his mother the violence of his attachment to Adela.

Elvira was thoughtful, then awaking as from a dream—"It is because you have seen no other female of her age, my son," she observed. "You must travel, you must go in search of one who can make you blessed for life, and then you may return, and love your sister with all the sincerity you are capable of."

"Travel, mother! must I leave the only two beings who are dear to me?" he asked.

"Yes, you must," replied Elvira; "your father has long wanted you to go to Madrid; you have repeatedly put off the journey, but it is my advice that you delay it no longer. You will there see new beauties, who will efface the form of Adela from your heart, and leave nothing more than the remembrance that she is your sister. You have completed your nineteenth year, and are not now a boy, for, believe me, it is time you be-

gan to think of settling yourself in the world, instead of wasting your years in the society of an affectionate sister, and a fond mother."

Elvira imprinted a maternal kiss on the pale cheek of her son, which became blanched from the moment she proposed his leaving that roof which sheltered her and Adela.—"What will become of you," said he, "when left to the tyranny of my father, without Orlando to share your sufferings? and my Adela too—must I leave her exposed to his caprice? No, no, that shall not be; for while I am here, his rage often falls on me, and then I have the satisfaction to reflect, that it did not alight on two hearts less able to endure it. Alas, my mother, I seem to inherit your misfortunes, for my miseries arise out of my blessings."

"What means my son?" asked Elvira.

"Why, why am I related to a being

so perfect as my sister?" he frantically demanded, striking his forehead.

Adela at this moment entered, with her favourite dove on her finger.

"Sweet emblem of thyself!" he sighed; "how wilt thou droop when Orlando shall be no more!"

"My brother! what ails my brother?" she said, affectionately throwing her arms round his neck.

"Off, off, Adela!" he replied; "touch me not, for I am unworthy love so pure as thine!"

"Oh, mother, our Orlando is ill, very ill," she said, turning to Elvira; "feel his temples, how they beat—his hands, how they burn! Where is father Paulo? what will become of me, if I lose my dear, my only brother?"

A violent flood of tears spoke her feelings, as she still leaned on his shoulder.

He rose, and pressing her to his heart, said—"Sweet innocence! this, this embrace must be the last!" then placing

her in Elvira's arms, he hastily left the room.

Orlando strolled into the grounds belonging to the castle, not knowing where he went, for his mind was chaos itself. Though wrapt in thought, he was incapable of thinking aright, and hurried on as if he was trying to fly from himself, till Murdico shook him by the arm, and awoke him from his painful reverie.

"How now, my young master," said he; "you seem to be walking in your sleep, for I have hallooed to you several times, without being able to make you hear, or stop your gallop. You certainly must be as deaf as the sod on which you stand."

"Would that I was stretched beneath it!" sighed Orlando. "What want you with me?"

"When a young man of your expectations wishes to be put to bed with the worms, he must have some weighty reason"

reason for longing for such delectable company," said Murdico, with a significant nod.

Orlando started, inwardly reproaching himself for his want of caution, for this man, of all others, he dreaded, and yet this man was the father of his mother's faithful Annette.

"But, come," continued Murdico, "do not look so stupid, though I have awoken you, for don De Torza waits your presence, and you are no stranger to the patience he is blessed with."

Orlando took the hint, and hastened to the study of his father, who he found in great agitation, from having read some letters that had just arrived, and he apparently was not in a very amiable temper.—"So, boy," he exclaimed, "you are found at last!"

"I am sorry I was not at hand when you first wanted me," replied Orlando.

"Peace, sirrah!" vociferated De Torza, "and listen. Your journey to Madrid



drid is at last determined on, therefore let me have no more entreaties to delay it."

"I am ready to go, sir, whenever you please," said the youth.

"'Tis well," observed his father, opening his desk; "that paper contains your instructions—read it, and subscribe to its conditions."

Orlando took the scroll, while, as he read, De Torza narrowly watched his countenance. The blood at first rushed to his face, then receded, leaving him pale as the paper he held in his hand. Having finished, he fixed his eyes on De Torza for some minutes, then, without speaking, read his instructions a second time, and again looked at the imperious don.

"Is it my father who requests me to comply with this?" Orlando asked.

"*Request!*" said De Torza; "no, no such thing—I do not *request* compliance——"

"Then "

“ Then I am thankful to find I misunderstood you,” interrupted Orlando.

“ Not so—you understand me perfectly,” observed his father, with a malicious smile. “ I never *entreat* where I have a right to *command*; and do not *request*, but *insist* on your signing that paper.”

“ Is it possible that a parent can act so strange a part?” asked the son.

“ Ay, it is,” replied the don; “ it was for this purpose I brought you up—for this intent I suffered you to live; and think you I will now be thwarted in my design?—Sign, or take the consequence.”

“ Never!” said Orlando; “ may my hand drop from my body if I do!”

“ Scoundrel!” vociferated De Torza; “ dare you venture to cross my purpose?”

“ If my life will satisfy you, I willingly will resign it; but my honour I will never part with,” replied the unhappy youth.

“ Minion!”

“Minion!” exclaimed De Torza, stamping with rage, “dost think thy paltry life could appease me? Death would be too small a punishment for a rebellious son! No, no—a different fate awaits you. I have deliberately laid all plans, and shall act according as necessity requires. Here is another paper, which will inform you of the consequence of a refusal.”

Orlando took it—read a few lines; his eyes seemed starting from their sockets, his hair stood erect, but he neither spoke or moved.

“Now, sir, do you choose to comply, or not?” tauntingly demanded De Torza.

Orlando ‘fell, and, with a deep groan, apparently expired. His unnatural parent had for once defeated his own intention, for, owing to his refined cruelty, the intended instrument of his diabolical purpose lay stretched at his feet.

The subject of the first paper was the  
murder’

murder of the king, by the hand of Orlando! The contents of the second, in case of a non-compliance, were the murder of Elvira and Adela, by the hand of De Torza!

No wonder Orlando felt as he did, for he was commanded to take away the life of his sovereign, whose character he revered, or sacrifice the lives of his mother and sister, whom he loved to adoration. Dreadful alternative!

It is in vain we ask why the persecutor is suffered to live? why the wicked are permitted to triumph, or the unoffending object of their hate is crushed beneath their tyranny? for these questions have remained unanswered for ages; and we must wait the great teacher death, ere the matter can be elucidated; for, in the finite state our capacities are in now, we cannot comprehend the reasons of Omniscience. Had a philosopher been placed in the situation of  
Orlando,

Orlando, he would have been equally distressed how to act.

De Torza began to blame his precipitancy, as he beheld the inanimate form of his son; and ringing for Murdico, ordered him to remove the body.—“ So,” said he, “ I always thought it would come to this, for I have often said to myself—‘ This youth was born to die by the hand of De Torza.’”

“ Then you deceived yourself, for he did not fall by my hand,” replied his master.

“ Probably not; but he fell by an instrument pointed by your hand,” said Murdico, sneeringly.

“ ’Tis false! he fell by his own cowardice!” vociferated De Torza.

“ Then it is no wonder,” interrupted the man, “ that you did not want *my* assistance.”

“ Do not irritate me, but remove the corpse,” said his master.

“ I will—to the usual depot, I suppose?”

pose?" asked the man, taking it up on his shoulder, "or what we commonly call the vault of murder."

"Scoundrel!" replied De Torza.

"Oh ho!" answered his man; "take it there yourself!" throwing the body on the ground; "I am no such scoundrel neither; not half so great a one as *you* are! If I have committed a few murders, it was you who was the instigator. Scoundrel, indeed!"

Matters might have ran high between them, had not the housekeeper's voice sounded on their ears; when Murdico, snatching up the body, ran and threw it into a vault, with such violence, that the most copious hemorrhage took place, and Orlando fetched a deep sigh. The man carried him back, saying to his master—"You may thank me for your son, for I have been his docter, by bleeding him at the nose; and now I shall turn nurse; so cheer up, my young master—

I may

I may prove rather awkward, but good will must plead my excuse."

He raised the sufferer, who was still insensible to all around him, and instead of leaving him in the vault, where many murdered victims had been thrown before, he carried him to his chamber, followed by De Torza.

Many hours elapsed before recollection returned; and when it did, Orlando's ideas were so confused, that he thought he had had a painful dream; till his eye rested on his father, who was sitting by his bedside, and then the horrid truth flashed upon his mind.

On reading the second paper, from which he understood, that by refusing to comply with the conditions of the first, he had endangered the lives of two beings, so dear to him as Elvira and Adela were, his feelings were too strong for endurance, and for a time robbed him of animation, which was an enviable state to what he now experienced. Happy  
would

would it have been for him, had life for ever ceased to throb! He did not attempt to speak, for he could no longer look upon De Torza as his parent, but lay silently revolving on his untoward fate, and gave himself up to the anguish which preyed on his heart. Whichever way he turned his thoughts, distraction stared him in the face.

De Torza saw the inward workings of his soul, and wisely left the room. Murdico sat up with him during the night; and from the few incoherent expressions dropped by Orlando about Adela, concluded him to be insane.

END OF VOL. II.





